Lu Hsun

Dawn Blossoms Plucked at Dusk

魯迅：朝花夕拾

Lu Hsun

Dawn Blossoms Plucked at Dusk

FOREIGN LANGUAGES PRESS
PEKING 1976

First edition 1976

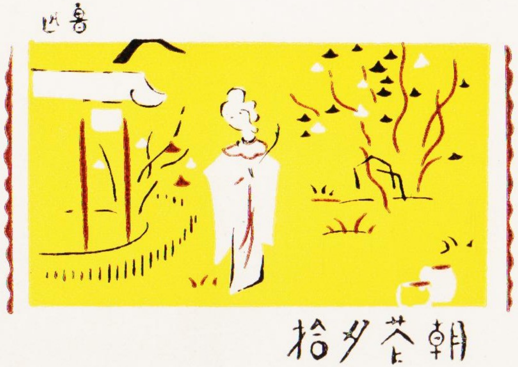
Translated by Yang Hsien-yi and Gladys Yang

Printed in the People's Republic of China

Publisher's Note

This collection of ten essays written by Lu Hsun (1881-1936) in 1926 was first published in September 1928 by the Wei Ming Society, Peking, as one of the "New Writings of the Wei Ming Society" series edited by the author himself.

The English translation of *Dawn Blossoms Plucked at Dusk* is based on the 1973 edition published by the People's Literature Publishing House, Peking.



Cover of the first Chinese edition of
Dawn Blossoms Plucked at Dusk

CONTENTS

PREFACE 1

DOGS, CATS, AND MICE 5

AH CHANG AND THE *BOOK OF HILLS AND SEAS* 17

THE PICTURE-BOOK OF TWENTY-FOUR ACTS OF FILIAL PIETY 26

THE FAIR OF THE FIVE FIERCE GODS 36

WU CHANG OR LIFE-IS-TRANSIENT 43

FROM HUNDRED-PLANT GARDEN TO THREE-FLAVOUR STUDY 53

FATHER'S ILLNESS 61

FRAGMENTARY RECOLLECTIONS 69

MR. FUJINO 80

FAN AI-NUNG 89

POSTSCRIPT 101

Preface

I often hanker after a little peace and respite from confusion, but it is really hard to come by. The present is so bizarre and my state of mind so confused. When a man reaches the stage when all that remains to him is memories, his life should probably count as futile enough, yet sometimes even memories may be lacking. In China there are rules for writing, and worldly affairs still move in a tortuous course. A few days ago when I left Sun Yat-sen University, I remembered how I left Amoy University four months ago; and the drone of planes overhead reminded me of the planes which, a year ago, had circled daily over Peking. At that time I wrote a short essay called "The Awakening."[1] Today, even this fails to "awaken" me.

It certainly grows hot early in Kwangchow; the rays of the setting sun shining through the west window force one to wear nothing but a shirt at most. The "water-bough" in a basin on my desk is something quite new to me, a lopped-off bough which, immersed in water, will put out lovely green leaves. Looking at these green leaves and editing some old manuscripts means that I am doing something, I suppose. Doing such trifling things, although really tantamount to death in life, is an excellent way of banishing the heat.

---

[1] Included in the collection *Wild Grass.*

The day before yesterday I finished editing *Wild Grass;* now it is the turn of *Recollections of the Past,* serialized in the magazine *Wilderness,* and I have changed its name to *Dawn Blossoms Plucked at Dusk.* Of course flowers plucked with dew on them are much fresher and sweeter, but I was unable to gather these at dawn. Even now I cannot readily transpose my confused thoughts and feelings into bizarre, confused writings. Perhaps some day when I look up at the fleeting clouds, they may flash before my eyes.

For a time I kept recalling the vegetables and fruits I ate as a child in my old home: caltrops, horse-beans, water bamboo shoots, musk-melons. So succulent, so delicious were they all, they beguiled me into longing for my old home. Later, tasting these things again after a protracted absence, I found them nothing special. It was only in retrospect that they retained their old flavour. They may keep on deceiving me my whole life long, making my thoughts turn constantly to the past.

These ten pieces are records transcribed from memory, perhaps deviating somewhat from the facts, but this is just how I remember things today. The writing itself is no doubt a strange hodgepodge, having been jotted down by fits and starts, over a period of nine months or more. The surroundings differed too: the first two pieces were written by the east wall of my house in Peking; the next three during my wanderings in hospitals and in a carpenter's workshop;[2] the last five on the top floor of the library of Amoy University, when those scholars there had already excluded me from their clique.[3]

Lu Hsun

Written in White Cloud Pavilion, Kwangchow
May 1, 1927

---

[2] In March 1926 the Northern warlord government started to hound Lu Hsun and other progressives, forcing him to hide that spring in several hospitals one after another. When all the beds in one hospital were occupied, he stayed in a room there used as a carpenter's workshop.

[3] While teaching in Amoy University, Lu Hsun was persecuted by its professors of the Hu Shih (1891-1962) clique.

Dogs, Cats, and Mice

Since last year I seem to have heard some people calling me a cat-hater. The evidence, naturally, was my tale "Rabbits and Cats,"[1] and this being a self-confession there was of course no defence to be made — but that worried me not at all. This year, however, I have begun to feel a little anxious. I cannot help scribbling from time to time, and when what I write is published it seldom scratches certain people where they itch but often strikes them on some sensitive spot. If I am not careful I may even offend celebrities and eminent professors or, worse still, some of the "elders responsible for guiding the youth."[2] And that would be extremely dangerous. Why so? Because these bigwigs are "not to be trifled with."[3] Why are they "not to be trifled with"? Because they may become so incensed that they publish a letter in a paper announcing: "See! Don't dogs hate cats? Mr. Lu Hsun himself admits to hating cats yet he also advocates beating 'dogs that have fallen into the water'!" The subtlety of this "logic" lies in its use of words from my own mouth to prove me a dog, from which it follows that any defence I make is completely overturned. Even if I say two twos make four, three threes make nine, every single word is wrong. And since they are wrong, it follows naturally that those gentlemen are right when they claim that two twos make seven and three threes a thousand.

---

[1] Included in the collection *Call to Arms*.

[2] Refers to professors such as Chen Hsi-ying and Hsu Chih-mo (1896-1931) of the Modern Critic clique who supported the Northern warlord government and attacked progressives.

[3] A phrase used by Hsu Chih-mo to describe Chen Hsi-ying and to intimidate Lu Hsun.

I tried to investigate the "motive" for their animosity. Far be it from me to ape the fashion of those modern scholars who use motive to belittle a work;[4] I was simply trying to clear myself in advance. To my mind, this would have been an easy matter for an animal psychologist, but unfortunately I lacked that special knowledge. Eventually, however, I discovered the reason in Dr. O. Dähnhardt's *Folk Tales of Natural History* which tells the following tale. The animals called a meeting on important business. All the birds, fish, and beasts assembled with the exception of the elephant. They decided to draw lots to choose one of their number to fetch him, and this task fell to the dog. "How can I find the elephant?" asked the dog. "I've never set eyes on him and have no idea what he looks like." The others replied, "That's easy. He has a humped back." The dog went off and met a cat, which immediately arched its back; so he gave it the message and they went back together. But when he introduced this arched-back cat to the others as the elephant, they simply laughed at him. That was the start of the feud between dogs and cats.

---

[4] Another reference to Chen Hsi-ying who had insinuated "His motives may be mixed. . . ." to belittle Lu Hsun's writings.

Although it is not very long since the Germans came out of their forests, their learning and art are already most impressive; even the binding of their books and the workmanship of their toys cannot fail to please. But this children's tale is really lacking in charm and offers such a futile reason for a feud. Since the cat did not arch its back to impose on others or give itself airs, the dog is to blame for a lack of acumen. Still, this counts as a reason of a sort. My own dislike of cats is very different.

In fact, no sharp distinction need be drawn between men and beasts. Although the animal kingdom is by no means as free and easy as the ancients imagined, there is less tiresome shamming there than in the world of men. Animals act according to their nature, and whether right or wrong never try to justify their actions. Maggots may not be clean, but neither do they claim to be immaculate. The way vultures and beasts prey on weaker creatures may be dubbed cruel, but they have never hoisted the banners of "justice" and "right"[5] to make their victims admire and praise them right up to the time they are devoured. When man learned to stand upright, that was of course a great step forward. When he learned to speak, that was another great step forward. When he learned to write, that was yet another great step forward. But then degeneration set in, because that was the beginning of empty talk. Empty talk is not so bad, but sometimes one may unwittingly say something one doesn't really mean; in which case, compared with inarticulate beasts, men should certainly feel ashamed. If there really is a Creator above who considers all creatures as equal, he may think these clever tricks of man rather uncalled for, just as in the zoo the sight of monkeys turning somersaults or female elephants curtseying, although it often raises a laugh, may at the same time make us uncomfortable or even sad, so that we think these uncalled-for tricks might well be dispensed with. However, being men we have to "close ranks against aliens" and try to justify ourselves as men do, according to the fashion of the time.

---

[5] Such terms were used by reactionary professors to cover up their true features.

Now as to my antipathy for cats, I consider that I have ample reason for it, moreover it is open and aboveboard. First, a cat is by nature different from other wild creatures in that whenever it catches a sparrow or mouse instead of killing its victim outright it insists on playing with it, letting it go, catching it again, then letting it go again until tiring of this game it finally eats it. This is very like the bad human propensity for delighting in the misfortunes of others and spinning out their torment. Secondly, although cats belong to the same family as lions and tigers, they are given to such vulgarity! However, this may be owing to their nature. If cats were ten times their present size, there is really no knowing how they would behave. But these arguments may appear thought up at the moment of writing, although I believe they occurred to me earlier on. A sounder explanation perhaps is simply this: their caterwauling when mating has become such an elaborate procedure that it gets on people's nerves, especially at night when one wants to read or sleep. At such times I have to retaliate with a long bamboo pole. When two dogs mate in the street, idlers often belabour them with sticks. I once saw an etching of this by P. Brueghel the Younger entitled

Allegorie der Wollust, showing that such actions are and always have been common to China and all other countries.

Ever since that eccentric Austrian scholar Sigmund Freud advocated psychoanalysis — which Mr. Chang Shih-chao is said to have translated as "heart examination," a fine, archaic-sounding term but one truly hard to understand — some of our celebrities and eminent professors have made use of it in their insinuations, suggesting that these actions must also perforce be attributed to sexual desire. Now, passing over the business of beating dogs to consider my beating of cats, this is solely on account of their caterwauling, quite devoid of malice aforethought, for my jealousy is not yet so inordinate. In these days when one is liable to be blamed at every move, I must proclaim this in advance. For instance, human beings too go through quite a lengthy procedure before mating. The new way is to write love-letters, at least one packet if not a whole sheaf; the old way was to "inquire names," "send betrothal gifts,"[6] kowtow and bow. When the Chiang family of Haichang had a wedding last year in Peking, they devoted three whole days to ceremonial calls and printed a red-covered Wedding Handbook with a preface in which they expatiated: "Fairly speaking, all rites should be elaborate. If simplicity were our aim, what need would there be for rites? . . . Thus all who are mindful of rites can rise to action. They should not descend to the level of the common herd who are too low for rites." This did not enrage me, however, because I was not required to attend; and this shows that my hatred of cats is really very easily explained just by that caterwauling so close to my ears. The various rites others indulge in are not the affair of outsiders and don't worry me; but if someone comes and insists on reciting love-letters or bowing and scraping just as I want to read a book or sleep, I have to defend myself with a long bamboo pole too. Then there are people with whom I normally have little to do who suddenly send me a red invitation card to "the nuptials of our younger sister" or "our son's wedding," "craving the honour" of my company or "soliciting the attendance" of my whole family. I dislike these phrases with their "sinister implications" which embarrass me unless I spend some money.

---

[6] Customs in the old system of arranging matches.

However, all this belongs to the recent past. Looking further back, my hatred of cats dates from a time long before I could expound these reasons, when I was perhaps ten years old. The reason I clearly remember was very simple: because cats eat mice — ate my beloved small pet mouse.

In the West, it is said, they are not too fond of black cats. I have no idea how correct this is; but the black cat of Edgar Allan Poe's story is certainly rather fearsome. Japanese cats are adept at becoming spirits, and the cruelty with which these legendary "cat witches" devour men is even more terrifying. Although China too had "cat spirits" in ancient times, in recent years we very seldom hear of feline black magic; it seems the old craft has died out and they have turned honest. And yet as a child I felt no goodwill towards cats, which to me had something monstrous about them. It so happened that one summer evening during my childhood I was lying on a small table under the cool shade of a large fragrant osmanthus tree while my grandmother, seated beside me waving a plantain fan, regaled me with riddles and stories. Suddenly from the fragrant osmanthus tree we heard a

stealthy scratch of claws and two gleaming eyes descended through the darkness. I gave a start, while my grandmother broke off her tale to tell me a different story about cats.

"Did you know that the cat was the tiger's teacher?" she asked. "How could a child know that the cat was once the tiger's master? To start with the tiger couldn't do a thing, so he turned to the cat for help. Then the cat taught him how to pounce on, catch, and eat his prey, the way that it caught rats. After these lessons the tiger thought he had mastered all the skills and no other creature was a match for him except his master the cat. If he killed the cat he would be cock of the walk. He made up his mind to it, and started stalking the cat. But the cat knew what he was up to. With one bound it leaped on to a tree, so that all the tiger could do was squat below glaring up. The cat hadn't taught all its skills: it hadn't taught the tiger to climb trees."

A good thing too, I thought. How lucky that the tiger was so impatient, otherwise a tiger might come crawling down from the fragrant osmanthus tree. Still this was all most alarming, I had better go indoors to sleep. It had grown darker; a breeze had sprung up, rustling the fragrant osmanthus leaves, and the mat on my bed must be cool enough for me to lie quietly without tossing and turning.

A room centuries old, dimly lit by a bean-oil lamp, is the happy hunting-ground of rats who scuttle to and fro squeaking, often giving themselves more arrogant airs than "celebrities and eminent professors." We kept a cat but it didn't earn its keep. Although my grandmother and other grownups complained of the way the rats gnawed through chests and stole food, that was no great crime in my eyes, and no business of mine; besides it was no doubt the big rats who were to blame for these misdeeds, and I would not have them slanderously imputed to my pet mouse. My type of mouse, no larger than a thumb, mostly scurried about the floor and was not too afraid of people. The local name for them was *yinshu,* and they were a different species from the monsters who lived in the roof. In front of my bed were pasted two coloured woodcuts. One, "The Marriage of Pigsy," consisted almost entirely of long snouts and large ears, and I didn't think much of it. The other, "The Mouse's Wedding," was quite charming. Every single mouse in it, from the bridegroom and bride down to the best man, bridesmaids, guests and attendants, had the high cheekbones and slender legs of scholars, although they wore red jackets and green trousers. To my mind, these beloved mice of mine were the only ones capable of conducting such an elaborate ceremony. Nowadays, things are cruder. When I meet a wedding procession in the street, I simply view it as an advertisement for sexual intercourse and pay scant attention. At that time, however, my longing to see a "mouse's wedding" was so strong that I doubt whether it would have exhausted my patience even if the ceremonies had continued for three nights, as in the case of the Chiang family of Haichang. On the eve of the Lantern Festival[7] I was always reluctant to go to sleep as I waited for that procession to emerge from under my bed. But all I saw were the same few mice wearing no clothes and parading the floor as usual, not attending any wedding apparently. When I could hold

---

[7] According to folk-lore in the Yangtze Valley, this was the time for mice to get married.

out no longer I fell into a disappointed sleep, and when I opened my eyes again another day had dawned — the Lantern Festival. Perhaps when mice marry they do not issue invitations angling for congratulatory gifts, nor even welcome people really eager to watch. This I imagine has always been their way and to protest is useless.

As a matter of fact the great enemy of mice is not the cat. At the end of spring if you hear the squeaking described as "mice counting coppers" you will know that the butcher of rats has appeared on the scene. This sound, expressing the panic of despair, is not caused by confrontation with a cat. Although a cat is frightening, mice need only dart into a small hole to render it powerless. They have many chances to escape. Only that baneful butcher the snake, long, thin and about the same in circumference as a mouse, can go wherever mice go and is so tenacious in pursuit that few mice escape from it. By the time one hears the "counting of coppers," the mouse is probably doomed.

Once I heard the "counting of coppers" from an empty room. When I opened the door and went in there was a snake on the beam. Lying on the floor I saw a mouse with blood trickling from one corner of its mouth, but still breathing. I picked it up and put it in a cardboard box where after a long time it came to. By degrees it was able to eat, drink and crawl about; and by the next day it seemed to have recovered. But it did not run away. When put on the ground it kept running up to people and climbing up their legs, right up to the knee. Placed on the dining-table, it would eat leftovers and lick the edges of bowls. Put on my desk, it would wander about freely and lick some of the ink being ground on the ink-stone. This amazed and delighted me. I had heard from my father that China had an ink-monkey no bigger than a thumb, covered with shining jet-black fur. It used to sleep in the jar for writing-brushes. At the sound of ink being ground it would jump out and wait. When the scholar had finished writing and put away his brush, it would lick up all the ink left on the ink-stone, then jump back into the brush jar. I longed, in vain, to possess one of these ink-monkeys. When I asked where they lived or where they could be bought, nobody could tell me. Something to give satisfaction is better than nothing. This mouse could count as my ink-monkey, although it did not always wait for me to finish writing before licking up my ink.

My recollection is none too clear, but this must have gone on for a month or two before, one day, I suddenly felt as lonely "as if bereft of something." My mouse was always in my sight running about on the table or on the floor. But today I hadn't seen it for hours. It didn't even come after the midday meal, a time when it normally always put in an appearance. I waited and waited all the rest of the day — still no sign of my mouse.

Mama Chang, my nurse, may have thought this waiting too upsetting for me, for she padded over to whisper something to me which plunged me into a fit of rage and grief and made me vow eternal hatred to cats. She told me that my mouse had been eaten the night before by the cat.

When I lose something I love, it leaves a gap in my heart which I have to fill in with thirst for revenge.

I set about my vengeance with our tabby, extending it gradually to all cats who crossed my path. To start with I just chased and beat them, later I refined on this and learned to hit them on the head with my sling or

lure them into an empty room and beat them until they were thoroughly chastened. This feud continued for a very long time until finally it seemed no cats came near me. But triumphing over cats most likely does not make a hero of me; moreover there cannot be too many people in China who keep up a lifelong feud with cats; hence I will pass over all my stratagems and exploits.

However, many days later, possibly even more than six months later, I happened to receive some unexpected news. My mouse had not been eaten by a cat — it had been trampled to death by Mama Chang when it tried to run up her leg.

This possibility had never occurred to me. I no longer remember my immediate reaction, but I was never reconciled to cats. After I came to Peking, the havoc wreaked among my small rabbits by a cat added to my former animosity, and I took sterner measures of reprisal. That gave a handle to those who call me a cat-hater. But today these are all things of the past and my attitude to cats has changed to one of extreme politeness. If forced to it I simply drive them away, never beating or hurting them let alone killing them. This is a mark of my progress in recent years. Accumulated experience led me to the sudden realization that nine persons out of ten are naturally disgusted by the way cats steal fish and meat, carry off chickens, or caterwaul late at night, and this disgust is centred on the cat. Should I attempt to rid men of this disgust by beating or killing cats, these would instantly become objects of pity while that disgust would be transferred to me. Accordingly my present method is: whenever I find cats making a nuisance of themselves, I step to my doorway and shout, "Hey! Scram!" When things quieten down a little I return to my study. In this way I preserve my capacity of safeguarding our home against foreign aggression. Actually this method is one commonly practised by officers and soldiers in China, who prefer not to wipe out all brigands or exterminate the enemy completely, for if they did so they would cease to be highly regarded and might even lose their function and their posts. To my mind, if I can get more people to use this tactic, I can hope to become one of the "elders responsible for guiding the youth." But I have not yet decided whether or not to put this into practice. I am still studying and pondering the matter.

February 21, 1926

Ah Chang and the *Book of Hills and Seas*

Mama Chang, as I have said elsewhere, was the maid who brought me up or — to give her a grander title — my nanny. That is what my mother and many others called her, for this sounded a little more polite. Only my grandmother called her "Ah Chang." I usually called her "Amah" without even adding the "Chang." But when I was angry with her — upon learning that she was the one who had killed my mouse, for example — then I also called her "Ah Chang."

We had no one in our parts with the surname Chang; and since she was swarthy, plump and short, "Chang" (long) was not used descriptively either. Nor was it her personal name. I remember she told me her name was Something Girl. What the epithet was I have forgotten, but it certainly was not "Long." And I never knew her surname. I recall her once telling me how she came by the name. Many, many years ago, our family had a very tall maidservant who was the real Ah Chang. Later on, when she left, this Something Girl of mine came to take her place; but because everyone was used to the name and did not want to change it, from that time on she became Mama Chang too.

Although it is bad to tell tales behind people's backs, if you want me to speak frankly I must admit I did not think much of her. What I most disliked was her habit of gossiping: she would whisper something in people's ears, saw the air with her forefinger, or point to the tip of her hearer's nose or her own. Whenever a minor storm blew up in the house, I could not help suspecting that her tittle-tattle had something to do with it. She restricted my movements too. If I pulled up a weed or turned over a stone, she would say I was naughty and threaten to tell my mother. And in bed during the summer she would stretch out her arms and legs like a huge character 大 (*da*), squeezing me so that I had no room to turn over, and my corner of the matting became hot after much lying on. But I could neither push her over, nor could I wake her by shouting.

"You're so plump, Mama Chang, you must find the heat very trying. Isn't that an awkward position for sleeping in?"

My mother put this question after hearing me complaining many times. And I knew it was a hint to my nanny to leave me more space. Ah Chang did not say anything. But that night when the heat woke me up, there was still a big character 大 spread-eagled over the bed, and one of her arms was thrown across my neck. It seemed to me there was really no way out.

She was most conventional in many ways, however, though most of her customs made me lose patience. The happiest time of the year was naturally New Year's Eve. After seeing the old year out, I put by my pillow the money wrapped in red paper which the grownups had given me. The next morning I could spend it as I pleased. I lay on my pillow eyeing the red packages, thinking of the small drum, the weapons, the clay figures and the sugar Buddha that I would buy tomorrow. Then she came in and put a Good-Luck Orange at the head of the bed.

"Remember this carefully, son!" she told me earnestly. "Tomorrow's the first day of the first month. When you open your eyes in the morning the first thing you must say is: 'Good luck, Amah!' Remember? You *must* remember, because this decides the whole year's luck. Don't say anything else, mind! And after you've said that, you must eat a piece of Good-Luck Orange." She picked up the orange and flourished it in front of me. "Then —

> The whole year through
> Luck will follow you!"

Even in my dreams I remembered it was New Year, and the next morning I woke specially early. As soon as I opened my eyes, I wanted to sit up. But at once she put out an arm to stop me. I looked at her in surprise, and saw her gazing at me anxiously.

Appealingly, as it were, she shook my shoulder. And suddenly I remembered.

"Good luck, Amah."

"Good luck! Good luck to us every one! Clever boy! Good luck!" Absolutely delighted, she laughed as she stuffed something icy cold into my mouth. When I had recovered from the shock, I realized that this must be the Good-Luck Orange. Now that all the ordeals to usher in New Year's Day were safely over, I could get up and play.

She taught me much other lore as well. For instance, if someone died, you should not say he was dead but "he has passed away." You should not enter a room where someone had died or a child had been born. If a grain of rice fell to the ground, you should pick it up, and the best thing was to eat it. On no account must you walk under the bamboo pole on which trousers or pants were hanging out to dry. . . . There was more, but I have forgotten most of it; and what I remember most clearly are the strange New Year rites. In short, these were all such niggling trifles that the thought of them today still makes me lose patience.

On one occasion, though, I felt an unprecedented respect for her. She often told me stories about the Long Hairs. And the Long Hairs she described were not only Hung Hsiu-chuan's[1] troops but appeared to include all later bandits and rebels as well, with the exception of the modern revolutionaries, who did not exist then. She described the Long Hairs as most fearful beings who talked in a way that no one could understand. According to her, when the Long Hairs entered our city all my family fled to the seaside, leaving just a gatekeeper and an old woman who did the cooking to look after the property. Then, sure enough, a Long Hair came to our house. The old woman called him "Great King" — it seems this was the way to address the Long Hairs — and complained that she was starving.

"In that case," said the Long Hair with a grin, "you can have this to eat!" And he tossed over something round with a small queue still attached to it — it was the gatekeeper's head! The old woman's nerves were never the same again. Whenever people spoke of this later, she would turn the colour of earth and beat her breast. "Aiya!" she would whimper. "It gave me such a turn! Such a turn it gave me. . . ."

I was not afraid, for I felt all this had nothing to do with me — I was not a gatekeeper. But Ah Chang must have guessed my thoughts, for she said:

"The Long Hairs would carry off little boys like you as well, to make little Long Hairs out of them. They carried off pretty girls too."

"Well, you'd be all right anyway."

I was sure she would have been quite safe, for she was neither a gatekeeper, nor a little boy, nor pretty. In fact, she had several scars on her neck where sores had been cauterized.

"How can you say such a thing?" she demanded sternly. "Were we no use to them then? They would carry us off as well. When government troops came to attack the city, the Long Hairs would make us take off our trousers and stand in a line on the city wall, for then the army's cannon could not be fired. If they fired then, the cannon would burst!"

This was certainly beyond my wildest dreams. I could not but be amazed. I had thought of her as nothing but a repository of irksome conventions, never guessing she had this tremendous spiritual power. After this I felt a special respect for her, for surely she was too deep for me to fathom. If she stretched out her arms and legs at night and occupied the whole bed, that was quite understandable. I ought to make room for her.

---

[1] Hung Hsiu-chuan (1814-64) led the Taiping Revolution (1851-64).

Although this kind of respect for her wore off by degrees, I believe it did not disappear completely till I discovered it was she who had killed my mouse. I cross-examined her sternly on that occasion, and called her "Ah Chang" to her face. Since I was not a little Long Hair and would not attack a city or let off a cannon, I need not be afraid of the cannon exploding — so why, thought I, need I be afraid of her?

But while mourning for my mouse and avenging him, I was also longing for an illustrated copy of the *Book of Hills and Seas.*[2] This longing had been aroused by a distant great-uncle of ours. A fat and kindly old man, he liked to grow plants such as chloranthus, and the rare silk-tree said to have come from the north. His wife was just the reverse: she was an ignoramus as regards flowers. Once she broke a branch of chloranthus by propping the bamboo for hanging out clothes on it; but her only reaction was to swear at the branch for breaking. The old man was a lonely soul with no one to talk to, so he liked children's company and often even called us his "young friends." In the compound where several branches of our clan lived, he was the only one with many books, and unusual ones at that. He had volumes of the essays and poems written for the examinations,[3] of course; but his was the only study where I could find Lu Chi's *Commentaries on the Flora and Fauna in the "Book of Songs,"*[4] and many other strange titles. My favourite in those days was *The Mirror of Flowers*[5] with all its illustrations. He told me there was an illustrated edition of the *Book of Hills and Seas* with pictures of man-faced beasts, nine-headed snakes, three-footed birds, winged men, and headless monsters who used their teats as eyes. . . . Unfortunately he happened to have mislaid it.

Eager as I was to look at pictures of this kind, I did not like to press him to find the book for me. He was very indolent. And none of the people I asked would give me a truthful answer. I had several hundred coppers of New Year money, but no opportunity to buy that book. The main street where books were sold was a long way from our house, and the New Year holiday was the only time in the year when I was able to go there to look around; but during that period the doors of both bookshops were firmly closed.

As long as I was playing it was not so bad, but the moment I sat down I remembered the illustrated *Book of Hills and Seas.*

Probably because I harped on the subject so much, even Ah Chang started asking what this *Book of Hills and Seas* was. I had never mentioned it to her, for I knew she was no scholar, so telling her would serve no purpose. Since she asked me, however, I told her.

About a fortnight or a month later, as I remember, four or five days after she had gone home on leave, she came back wearing a new blue cloth jacket. The moment she saw me she handed me a package.

---

[2] This work written in the Warring States Period (475-221 B.C.) contains many early myths and legends.

[3] Refers to the *bagu* ("eight-legged") essays based on phrases taken from Confucian classic, and the poems based on a line from some ancient poem, which usually had eight lines with five characters in each.

[4] This third-century work was a study of the flora and fauna mentioned in the *Book of Songs.*

[5] A manual for gardeners by Chen Hao-tzu of the seventeenth century.

"Here, son!" she said cheerfully. "I've bought you that *Book of Holy Seas* with pictures."

This was like a thunderbolt. I was struck all of a heap. I hastened to take the package and unwrap the paper. There were four small volumes and, sure enough, when I flipped through the pages, the man-faced beast, the nine-headed snake . . . all of them were there.

This inspired me with a new respect. What others would not or could not do, she had been able to accomplish. She really did have tremendous spiritual power. My resentment against her for killing my mouse vanished for good and all.

These four volumes were the first I ever possessed, and my most treasured book.

I can still see them today. But now it seems to me that both the printing and the engraving were extremely crude. The paper was yellow and the drawings very poor, consisting almost entirely of straight lines joined together — even the animals' eyes were oblong. Nevertheless this was my most treasured book. There you could really find the man-faced beast, the nine-headed snake, the one-footed ox, the sack-like monster Ti Chiang, Hsing Tien who had no head but "used his teats as eyes and his navel as mouth" and "danced with spear and shield"!

After this I began seriously collecting illustrated books. I acquired the *Phonetics and Illustrations for "Erh Ya"*[6] and *Illustrations to the "Book of Songs."*[7] I also had the

---

[6] One of the many annotated editions of the *Erh Ya*, a lexicon written about the second century B.C.

[7] An eighteenth-century Japanese work.

Paintings Collected by Tien-Shih-Chai[8] and *A Shipload of Painting and Poetry.*[9] I bought another lithographed edition of the *Book of Hills and Seas* too, with illustrations and concluding verses to each chapter. The pictures were green and the characters red — much more handsome than my woodblock edition — and I had this book till the year before last. It was a small edition with Hao Yi-hsing's[10] commentary. As for the woodblock edition, I cannot remember now when that was lost.

My nurse, Mama Chang or Ah Chang, must have departed this life a good thirty years ago. I never found out her name or history. All I know is that she had an adopted son, so she was probably left a widow very early.

Dark, kindly Mother Earth, may her spirit ever rest peacefully in your bosom!

March 10

---

[8] A collection of paintings by Chinese and Japanese artists printed in 1885.

[9] A collection of paintings with poems attached to each, compiled in the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century.

[10] Hao Yi-hsing (1757-1825), a Ching-Dynasty scholar.

The Picture-Book of Twenty-Four Acts of Filial Piety

I shall never cease to search far and wide, high and low, for the blackest, *blackest,* curses for all who oppose and sabotage the use of the vernacular in writing. Even if men's spirits live on after death and I am sent to Hell for such viciousness, I shall certainly not repent but never cease to curse all those who oppose and sabotage the vernacular.

Ever since the so-called "literary revolution,"[1] though children's books in China are still most pathetic compared with those in Europe, America and Japan, at least there have been illustrations to go with the text, and as long as children can read they can understand them. However, some people with ulterior motives are doing their utmost to ban these books, in an attempt to make the world of children devoid of every vestige of enjoyment. In Peking today, the term *Ma-hu-tzu* is often used to frighten children. Some say this refers to Ma Shu-mou who supervised the digging of the Grand Canal for Emperor Yang Ti of Sui and who, according to the *Record of the Construction of the Canal,*[2] used to steam children alive; therefore, properly speaking, the term should mean Ma the Hun. But whether Ma was a Hun or not, there must have been a limit to his eating of children — it must have been confined to his own lifetime. Those, however, who sabotage the use of the vernacular are worse than floods or wild beasts; their pernicious influence is so widespread and so lasting, it can turn the whole of China into a Ma the Hun devouring all children in his murderous maw.

Death to all who conspire to murder the vernacular!

Of course, gentlemen are liable to stop their ears on hearing this, for these are the words of one who "leaps into midair and tears others limb from limb — never ceasing his railing."[3] Men of letters are bound to condemn him too for his flagrant breach of "literary conventions" and consequent loss of "human dignity." For is it not said "Words express what is in the heart"? Of course, "literary style" and "human dignity" are interrelated, although in this world wonders never cease and there is a particular species of professor who "cannot respect" a writer's human dignity yet "has to admit that he writes good short stories." However, this does not worry me, for luckily I have not yet climbed up to any "ivory tower" and therefore need not be on my guard. If by any chance I had scrambled on to one, I should promptly fall off. But in falling, while hurtling to the ground, I would still repeat:

---

[1] I.e., the literary reforms during the May Fourth Movement of 1919.

[2] A tenth-century (?) prose romance.

[3] Professor Chen Hsi-ying's travesty of Lu Hsun.

Death to all who conspire to murder the vernacular!

Whenever I see a schoolchild poring raptly over some crudely printed *Children's World*[4] or the like, I remember what excellent children's books there are in other countries and naturally feel sorry for Chinese children. Yet, when I think back to my classmates' and my own childhood, I cannot but regard today's children as lucky and sadly mourn our youth now gone for ever. What did we have to read? Any book with a few illustrations was banned by our teacher, the "elder" then responsible for "guiding the youth," and we would be reprimanded for reading it or even have our hands caned. When my young classmates got bored to death by reading nothing but "Man is by nature good," they could only turn surreptitiously to the first page to look at the monstrous picture of Kueihsing[5] entitled "The Star of Literature Shines on High," to satisfy their innate childish love for beauty. Day after day this was all they had to look at, yet still their eyes gleamed with growing comprehension and delight.

Outside school, restrictions were relatively less rigid, in my case at any rate, for no doubt it was different for different people. I could read openly in front of others *The God Wen-chang Rewards Virtue* and *Records of the Jade Calendar*,[6] both illustrated stories about due deserts being meted out for good and evil in the unknown realms, showing the God of Thunder and the Goddess of Lightning in the sky, the Ox-head and Horse-face devils in the nether regions. So not only was it against the rules of Heaven to "leap into midair," even a slip of the tongue, a wrong thought in passing, would meet with the appropriate retribution. Nor would this be a question of "personal resentment," for there gods and ghosts held sway and "justice" governed; thus it would be useless to give a feast or kneel to beg for mercy, there would be simply no way out at all. In the Chinese cosmos it is fearfully difficult to be a man, and equally difficult to be a ghost. Nonetheless there is a better place than earth, a place free from "gentlemen" and "gossip."

To play safe, one must not praise the nether regions. This applies particularly to those who like to flourish a brush-pen in present-day China, under the rule of "gossip" and at a time when "consistency between word and deed" is advocated. We should take warning from previous examples. I have heard that in answer to a girl's question M. Artsybashev once said: Finding happiness in life itself is the only way to go on living; those who can find none would be better dead. Then a fellow called Mikhailov wrote a letter deriding him: ". . . In this case, in all sincerity I advise you to take your own life; for in the first place this would be logical, in the second it would show that you are as good as your word."

Actually this argument is an attempt at murder, and that is how Mikhailov found his happiness. Artsybashev simply poured out a stream of complaints but he did not kill himself. What became of Mr. Mikhailov we do not know. This particular happiness slipped through his fingers, but perhaps he found something else in place of it. Certainly "In times like these, courage is the safest course; passion entails no danger."

Still, I have after all already praised Hell, and it is too late to retract. Though this lays me open to the charge of "inconsistency in word and action," at least I can defend myself on the strength of the fact that I certainly never accepted half a cent as subsidy from the King of Hell or any lesser devils. So when all's said, I may as well go on writing.

---

[4] A weekly magazine published at that time.

[5] The god in charge of literary talent in ancient Chinese mythology.

[6] Two old religious books.

All those pictures I saw of the nether regions were in old books belonging to my family, not in books of my own. The very first picture-book I acquired, a gift from one of my elders, was *The Picture-Book of Twenty-Four Acts of Filial Piety.*[7] Though only a slim volume it had pictures with captions above them, and fewer ghosts than people; moreover it was my personal property, so I was delighted with it. The stories in it were apparently known to all, even to illiterates like Mama Chang, who would launch into a long account after just one glance at a picture. But my initial elation was followed by disappointment, for after asking people to tell me these twenty-four stories, I realized how hard it was to be "filial." This completely dashed my original foolish hope of becoming a "filial son."

Are men by nature good? This is not a problem we need go into now. Yet I still remember vaguely that as a boy I never really wanted to be unfilial, and was really keen to be a good son to my parents. But I was young and ignorant, and to my mind being "filial" meant nothing more than obedience, carrying out orders and, when I grew up, seeing that my aged parents were well fed. After getting this textbook on filial piety, I realized my error: it was tens or hundreds of times more difficult.

Of course there were some examples one could emulate, like Tzu-lu's carrying rice or Huang Hsiang's fanning the pillow. Nor would it be difficult to hide tangerines in my pocket as Lu Chi had done, so long as some bigwig invited me to a meal. When he asked: "Why are you, a guest, pocketing tangerines, Mr. Lu Hsun?" I would kneel to reply: "My mother loves tangerines. I would like to take her back some." Then the bigwig would be filled with admiration and, sure enough, my name would be made as a filial son with a minimum of trouble.

"Weeping to Make the Bamboo Put Out Shoots" presented more of a problem, for my sincerity might not move Heaven and Earth to such an extent. Still, even if my tears failed to produce bamboo shoots, it would mean no more than a loss of face, whereas "Lying on Ice to Find Carp" could really prove a matter of life and death. The climate in my native parts is so temperate that in the depth of winter only a thin layer of ice forms on the water, but if a child however light lay on the ice — crack! — the ice would be bound to break and I would fall in before any carp had time to swim over to me. Of course, filial piety practised in disregard of one's own life will make God work unlooked-for miracles. But I was too young then to understand such things.

The two stories I found hardest to understand, even reacting with aversion to them, were "Old Lai Tzu Amuses His Parents" and "Kuo Chu Buries His Son."

I can still remember my different reactions to both: the old man lying on his back before his parents, and the child in his mother's arms. Old man and child alike were holding a rattle. This is really a delightful toy. Known in Peking as a "small drum," the ancients called it *tao*. According to Chu Hsi,[8] "The *tao* is a small drum with ears on both sides which beat against the drum when the handle is shaken." This is what makes a rattle. Still such a thing was out of place in Old Lai Tzu's hand, he should instead have been leaning on a stick. His whole behaviour was bogus, an insult to children. I never looked a second time at that picture. As soon as I reached that page I would quickly turn over.

---

[7] Compiled by Kuo Chu-ching in the fourteenth century.

I lost track long ago of that *Picture-Book of Twenty-Four Acts of Filial Piety*. The copy now in my possession has illustrations by the Japanese Oda Umisen. The account of Old Lai Tzu in this is as follows: "Aged seventy, he did not call himself old but habitually wore motley garments and gambolled like a child before his parents. He also often carried water up to the hall, and would pretend to trip up and fall, then cry like a baby to amuse his parents." The account in my old copy was probably similar. What disgusted me was his *pretending* to trip up. Most small children, whether disobedient or filial, don't like being hypocritical, and when listening to stories they don't like being told lies. Anyone who pays the least attention to child psychology knows this.

However, if we look up older texts, we find Old Lai Tzu was not such a hypocrite. Shih Chueh-shou's *Accounts of Filial Sons* relates: "Old Lai Tzu . . . habitually wore motley colours to please his parents. Once when mounting the steps to the hall with water fetched for them to drink he fell down and, in order not to

---

[8] Chu Hsi (1130-1200), the well-known Confucian scholar who further developed and systematized the neo-Confucianist philosophy of Cheng Hao and Cheng Yi in the Northern Sung Dynasty (960-1127), was the representative of reactionary Confucianism in the later period of Chinese feudal society.

distress them, lay there and cried like a baby." (See Book 413 of *The Imperial Encyclopedia of the Taiping Era*.[9]) This sounds more reasonable than the present-day account. Who knows why gentlemen of a later age had to change him into a hypocrite before they could rest easy in their minds? When Teng Po-tao[10] abandoned his son to save his nephew, I fancy he simply "abandoned" him, nothing more; but again muddle-headed men had to claim that, unwilling to let it go at that, he must needs tie his son to a tree to stop the boy from overtaking them. Like "taking delight in what is nauseating," this presentation of inhumanity as morality vilifies the ancients and perverts posterity. Old Lai Tzu is a case in point. Regarded by Neo-Confucian gentlemen as an ideal example of impeccable character, in the minds of children he is dead and done for.

But as for Kuo Chu's son playing with his rattle, he really deserves compassion. In his mother's arms he is smiling gleefully, yet his father is digging a hole in which to bury him. The caption says: "Kuo Chu of the Han Dynasty was poor, and his mother denied herself food to give it to his three-year-old son. Kuo told his wife: We are too poor to provide well for my mother, and our son is depriving her of food. Should we not bury him?" But Liu Hsiang's *Lives of Filial Sons* gives another, rather different, version. It says that Kuo Chu, a rich man, gave all his property to his two younger brothers; his son was a new-born babe, not a three-year-old. The conclusion is similar: "He dug a pit two feet deep and found a crock of gold on which was written: This is Heaven's reward for Kuo Chu. Let no officials confiscate it, no men seize it!"

---

[9] This consisted of a thousand books compiled by Li Fang (925-96) and others in 977.

[10] Teng Po-tao (?-326) of the Tsin Dynasty was said to have abandoned his own son while fleeing from the enemy, in order to save his nephew.

At first I broke into a real cold sweat for that child, not breathing freely again until the crock of gold had been dug up. But by then not only did I no longer aspire to be a filial son myself, I dreaded the thought of my father acting as one. At that time our family fortunes were declining, I often heard my parents worrying as to where our next meal was to come from, and my grandmother was old. Suppose my father followed Kuo Chu's example, wasn't I the obvious person to be buried? If things worked out exactly as before and he too dug up a crock of gold, naturally that would be happiness great as Heaven; but small as I was at the time I seem to have grasped that, in this world, such a coincidence couldn't be counted on.

Thinking back now, I see what a simpleton I was really. This is because today I understand that no one in fact observes these old fetishes. Despatches and telegrams galore urge us to preserve order and morality, but seldom indeed do we see gentlemen lying naked on the ice or generals alighting from their cars to carry rice. Besides, now that I am a grown man, having read a few old books and bought a few new ones — *The Imperial Encyclopedia of the Taiping Era, Lives of Filial Sons of Old,*[11] *The Population Problem, Birth Control, The Twentieth Century Belongs to the Children* and so forth — I have many arguments to oppose being buried. It is simply

that times have changed. In those days I really was rather apprehensive. For if a deep hole was dug but no gold discovered, if rattle and all I was buried and covered with earth, which was then firmly tramped down, what way out could there possibly be? Although I thought this might not necessarily happen, from that time on I dreaded hearing my parents deplore their poverty and dreaded the sight of my white-haired grandmother, feeling that there was no place for the two of us, or at least that she represented a threat to me. Later on this impression faded from day to day, but vestiges of it lingered on until at last she died — this doubtless is something that the Confucian scholar who gave me *The Picture-Book of Twenty-Four Acts of Filial Piety* could never have foreseen.

May 10

---

[11] Compiled by Mao Pan-lin in the Ching Dynasty (1644-1911) on the basis of earlier accounts of filial sons.

The Fair of the Five Fierce Gods

In addition to New Year and other festivals, we children looked forward to the temple fairs in honour of certain gods. But because my home was rather out of the way, not till the afternoon did the processions pass our door, by which time the retinue had dwindled away until there was almost nothing left of it. Often, after hours of craning our necks and waiting, all we saw was some dozen men running hastily past carrying an effigy of a god with a golden, blue or crimson face. And that was all.

I always hoped that *this* procession would be bigger and better than the last, but the result was invariably more or less the same. And all I was left with was a souvenir bought for one copper before the god passed by — a whistle made of a bit of clay, a scrap of coloured paper, a split bamboo, and two or three cock's feathers. This whistle, known as a "tootle-toot," produced a piercing blast, and I blew it lustily for two or three days.

Now when I read Chang Tai's[1] *Reminiscences,* I am struck by the splendour of temple fairs in his time, even if these Ming Dynasty writers do tend to exaggerate. The practice of welcoming the dragon king in praying for rain still continues, but it is very simply done, with only some dozen men carrying a dragon and making it twist and coil, while village boys dress up as sea monsters. In the old days they acted plays, and it was most spectacular. Here is Chang Tai's description of a pageant with characters from *Shui Hu Chuan* (*Water Margin*):[2]

"... They went out in all directions to find one fellow who was short and swarthy, another who was tall and hefty, a mendicant friar, a fat monk, a stout woman and a slender one. They looked for a pale face too and a head set askew, a red moustache and a handsome beard, a strong dark man and one with ruddy cheeks and a long beard. They searched high and low in the town, and if they failed to find any character they went outside the city walls, to the villages and hamlets in the hills, even to neighbouring prefectures and counties. A high price was paid to the thirty-six men who played the heroes of Liangshan; but each looked his part to the life, and they went out in force on horseback and on foot. . . ."

Who could resist watching such a lifelike pageant of the men and women of days gone by? The pity is that such brave shows disappeared long ago along with the Ming Dynasty.

Though these processions were not prohibited by the authorities — unlike women's long gowns in Shanghai today or the discussion of politics in Peking — still, women and children were not allowed to watch them, and educated people or the so-called literati seldom went to look on either. Only layabouts and idlers would gather before the temple or yamen to watch the fun; and since most of my knowledge of these festivities comes from their accounts it is not the firsthand observation so much valued by researchers. I do, however, remember once witnessing a rather fine show myself. First came a boy on horseback called the Announcer. Then, after a considerable interval, the High Pole arrived. This was a great bamboo pole to which a long banner was attached, and it was carried in both hands by a huge fat man dripping with perspiration. When in the mood he would balance the pole on his head or teeth, or even on the tip of his nose. He was followed by stilt-walkers, children on platforms carried by men, and other children on hobbyhorses. There were people dressed in red like felons too, loaded with cangues and chains, some of whom were also children. To me each part was glorious and each participant extremely lucky — I very likely envied them this chance to show off. I used to wish I could have some serious illness, so that my mother would go to the temple to promise the god that I would masquerade as a felon. . . . So far, though, I have failed to have any association with these processions.

---

[1] Chang Tai was a seventeenth-century scholar.

[2] A Chinese novel by the fourteenth-century writer Shih Nai-an glorifying capitulationism which ruined a peasant revolt.

Once I was to go to Tungkuan Village for the Fair of the Five Fierce Gods. This was a great occasion in my childhood, for this fair was the grandest in the whole county and Tungkuan Village was very far from my home, more than twenty miles by boat from the town. There were two remarkable temples there. One was the Temple to Lady Mei, the virgin mentioned in the *Tales of Liao Chai*[3] who remained unmarried after the death of her betrothed and became a goddess after she died, but then appropriated someone else's husband. On the shrine, sure enough, the images of a young man and woman were smiling at each other, counter to all the laws of propriety. The other was the Temple to the Five Fierce Gods, the very name of which was strange enough. According to those with a passion for research, these were the Wu Tung Gods.[4] There is no conclusive proof of this, however. The images were five men who did not look particularly fierce, and behind them sat five wives in a row, this intermingling of sexes falling far short of the strict segregation practised in Peking theatres. In fact, this was counter to all the laws of propriety too; but since these were the Five Fierce Gods, nothing could be done about it. They were obviously an exception to the rule.

Since Tungkuan Village was a long way from the town, we all got up at dawn. The big boat with three windows fitted with shell-panes booked the night before was already moored in the harbour, and to it our men started carrying the chairs, food, a stove for brewing tea, and a hamper of cakes. Laughing and skipping, I urged them to get a move on. Suddenly from their respectful expression I knew there was something up. I looked round and saw my father standing behind me.

"Go and fetch your book," he said slowly.

The book he meant was the *Rhymed History*[5] which served as my primer. I had no other book. In our district children started school when their years were odd not even: that is how I know I must have been seven at the time.

---

[3] Tales about fairies, ghosts and fox-spirits by Pu Sung-ling (1640-1715).

[4] Evil spirits worshipped in the south China countryside in early times.

[5] Written by Wang Shih-yun in the Ching Dynasty.

With trepidation I fetched the book. He made me sit beside him at the table in the centre of the hall and read to him sentence by sentence. Inwardly quaking, I read to him sentence by sentence.

Two sentences made one line, and I must have read twenty or thirty lines.

"Learn them by heart," he said. "If you cannot recite them correctly, you will not be allowed to go to the fair."

This said, he stood up and walked into his room.

I felt as if someone had doused me with icy water. But what could I do? Naturally I had to read and re-read, and force myself to memorize — I would have to recite it too.

> "In the beginning was Pan Ku,
> Born of primeval void;
> He was the first to rule the world,
> The chaos to divide."

That is the kind of book it was. The first four lines are all I can remember. I have forgotten the rest, including of course the twenty or thirty lines I was forced to memorize that day. I remember hearing it said at the time that studying the *Rhymed History* was more useful than studying the *Thousand Characters* or the *Hundred Surnames*,[6] for from it you could learn the outline of all history past and present. It is naturally a very good thing to know the outline of all history past

---

[6] Two elementary texts for school-children in the old society.

and present. My trouble was that I couldn't understand a word. "In the beginning was Pan Ku" — to me this was mere gibberish. I read on and learned it by heart.

> "In the beginning was Pan Ku,
> Born of primeval void. . . ."

Everything needed had been carried to the boat. The noise and bustle at home had turned to silence. The morning sun shone on the western wall. The weather was clear and fine. Mother, the servants, my nanny Mama Chang or Ah Chang — none of them could rescue me. They had to wait in silence till I had learned my lesson and could recite it. In the utter stillness it seemed as if iron pincers would thrust out from my head to seize that "Born of primeval void" and all the other lines. And I could hear my voice quaver as I read desperately on, quaver like a cricket's chirping on a late autumn night.

Everybody was waiting. The sun had risen even higher.

Suddenly I felt a surge of confidence. I stood up, picked up the book, and went to my father's study to recite all those lines in one breath. I recited as if in a dream.

"Good. You may go." Father nodded his head as he spoke.

At once everyone sprang into action, breaking into smiles as we set out for the harbour. A servant carried me high as if to congratulate me on my success as he strode ahead of the rest.

I was not as happy as they were, though. After the boat cast off, the riverside scenery, the cakes in the hamper, the bustle of the fair when we reached Tungkuan Village — none of these seemed to me very interesting.

Now everything else is forgotten, vanished without a trace. Only my recitation from the *Rhymed History* is as clear in my mind as if it happened yesterday.

Even now, when I think of it, I still wonder why my father made me learn a lesson by heart at a time like that.

May 25

Wu Chang or Life-Is-Transient

If the gods who parade at temple fairs have power of life and death — no, this is wrongly put, for all gods in China seem able to kill men at will — if their task rather, like that of the guardian deity of a city or the Emperor of the East Mountain, is to control human fate, in their retinue you will find some unusual figures: ghostly attendants, the ghostly king, and Wu Chang or Life-Is-Transient.

These spirits are usually impersonated by stout fellows or country folk. The ghostly attendants and their king wear red and green and go barefoot, while on their blue faces are painted fish scales — perhaps the scales of a dragon or some other creature — I am not quite clear on this point. The ghostly attendants carry steel tridents with rings attached which clang when shaken; and the ghostly king carries a small tiger-head tally. According to tradition, the king should walk with one foot; but since after all he is simply a countryman, even though he has painted his face with the scales of a fish or some other creature, he still has to walk with two feet. Hence spectators are not much impressed by these ghosts and pay scant attention to them, with the exception of some devout old women and their grandchildren, who treat all spirits with proper trepidation and reverence in order that none of them may feel left out.

As for the rest of us — I believe I am speaking for others as well as myself — what we most enjoy watching is Wu Chang. Not only is he lively and full of fun; the mere fact of his being completely in white among that gaudy throng makes him stand out like a stork in a flock of fowls. A distant glimpse of his tall white paper hat and his tattered palm-leaf fan makes everyone feel pleasantly excited.

Of all spirits he is the nearest and dearest to men, and we often come across him. In the temple to the guardian deity of a city or the Emperor of the East Mountain, for example, behind the main hall is a dark room called the Court of Hell; and barely perceptible through the gloom are the images of ghosts: one who died by hanging, one who fell to his death, one who was killed by a tiger, one who expired in the examination cell . . . but the long white figure you see as you enter is Wu Chang. Though I once paid a visit to the Court of Hell, I was much too timid then to take a good look. I have heard that he carries an iron chain in one hand, because he is the summoner of dead men's spirits. Tradition has that the Court of Hell in the temple of the Emperor of the East Mountain in Fanchiang[1] was strangely constructed with a movable plank just inside the threshold. When you entered and stepped on one end of this plank, Wu Chang would fly over from the other end and throw his iron chain neatly round your neck; but after a man had been frightened to

---

[1] A town ten miles east of Shaohsing.

death in this way they nailed the plank down. Even in my young days it no longer moved.

If you want to take a good look at him, you will find his picture in the *Records of the Jade Calendar*. It may not be in the abridged version, but in the complete version you are sure to find it. He is wearing deep mourning and straw sandals, with a straw belt round his waist and a string of paper money round his neck. He holds the tattered palm-leaf fan, a chain and an abacus; his shoulders are slightly hunched, his hair is dishevelled; and his eyebrows and eyes tilt down at the sides like the Chinese character 八 (*ba*). He wears a peaked, rectangular hat, which, reckoned in proportion to the portrait as a whole, must be about two feet high. In front of the hat, where relicts old and young of the Ching Dynasty would fasten a pearl or jewel on their melon-shaped caps, is the vertical inscription: Good luck to you! According to another version, the words are: So you are here too. This is the same phrase sometimes found on the horizontal tablet over the Court of the Venerable Pao.[2] Whether Wu Chang wrote these words on his hat himself or the King of Hell wrote them for him I have not yet been able to ascertain in the course of my researches.

In the *Jade Calendar* can also be found Life-Is-Transient's opposite number, a ghost similarly equipped whose name is Death-Is-Predestined. He also appears in temple fairs, where he is wrongly known as Death-Is-Transient. Since his face and clothes are black, nobody cares to look at him. He too appears in the Court of Hell, where he stands facing the wall with a funereal air about him — a genuine case of "knocking against the wall."[3] All who come in to worship and burn incense are supposed to rub his back, and this is said to rid you of bad luck. I rubbed his back too when I was small, but I never seem to have been free of bad luck. Perhaps if I hadn't rubbed it my luck would have been still worse. This again I have not yet been able to ascertain in the course of my researches.

---

[2] Pao Cheng (999-1062), Prefect of Kaifeng in the Northern Sung Dynasty. It was believed that after his death he became one of the ten Kings of Hell.

I have made no study of the canons of Hinayana Buddhism, but I hear that in Indian Buddhist lore you have the god Yama and the ox-headed devil, both of whom reign in hell. As for Mr. Transient, who summons spirits, his origin cannot be traced to ancient times, yet the saying "life is transient" is a common one. I suppose once this concept reached China, it was personified. So Wu Chang is actually a Chinese invention.

But why is everyone pleasantly excited to see him?

When a great scholar or famous man appears anywhere, he has only to flourish his pen to make the place a "model county."[4] At the end of the Han Dynasty Yu Fan[5] praised my native place; but that after all was too long ago, for later this county gave birth to the notorious "Shaohsing pettifoggers."[6] Of course, not all of us — old and young, men and women — are pettifoggers in Shaohsing. We have quite a few other "low types" too. And you cannot expect these low types to express themselves in such wonderful gibberish as this: "We are traversing a narrow and dangerous path, with a vast and boundless marsh-land on the left and a vast and boundless desert on the right, while our goal in front looms darkly through the mist."[7] Yet in some instinctive way they see their path very clearly to that darkly looming goal: betrothal, marriage, rearing children, and death. Of course, I am speaking here of my native place only. The case must be quite different in model counties. Many of them — I mean the low types of my unworthy county — have lived and suffered, been slandered and blackmailed so long that they know that in this world of men there is only one association which upholds justice,[8] and even that looms darkly; inevitably, then, they look forward to the nether regions. Most people consider themselves unjustly treated. In real life "upright gentlemen" can fool no one. And if you ask ignorant folk they will tell you without reflection: Fair judgements are given in Hell!

Of course, when you think of its pleasures life seems worth living; but when you think of its sorrows Wu Chang may not be unwelcome. High or low, rich or poor alike, we must all appear empty-handed before the King of Hell, who will right all wrongs and punish evil-doers. Even low types sometimes stop to reflect: What sort of life have I led? Have I "leapt into midair"? Have

---

[3] In 1925 Lu Hsun wrote the essay "After 'Knocking Against the Wall' " in which he said: "In China there are walls everywhere but they are invisible, like 'ghost walls,' so that you knock into them all the time."

[4] Professor Chen Hsi-ying had described his hometown Wusih as a "model county."

[5] Yu Fan (164-233) was a late-Han scholar who wrote in praise of Shaohsing.

[6] Many secretaries in yamens dealing with lawsuits came from Shaohsing. Chen Hsi-ying attacked Lu Hsun by saying that he had the temperament of a pettifogger.

[7] Quotation from a letter from Chen Hsi-ying to Hsu Chih-mo.

[8] Refers to the Association for the Upholding of Justice Among Educational Workers, organized by Chen Hsi-ying and others in 1925 to oppress the students of the Women's Normal College and other progressives.

I "stabbed other people in the back"?[9] In Wu Chang's hand is a big abacus, and no amount of superior airs will do a man any good. We demand undiluted justice from others, yet even in the infernal regions we hope to find some mercy for ourselves. But when all is said, this is hell. And the King of Hell, the ox-headed devil, and the horse-faced devil invented by the Chinese are all working away at one job and honestly administer justice, though they have published no significant articles in the papers. Before becoming ghosts, honest people, when thinking of the future, have to search for fragments of mercy in the sum total of justice and to them Mr. Life-Is-Transient appears rather lovable. "One chooses the greater profit and the lesser evil."[10] This is what our ancient philosopher Mo Ti preached.

You cannot see Wu Chang's charm from the clay figure in the temple or the printed picture in the book. The best way is to see him in the opera. And ordinary opera will not do: it must be the Great Drama or Maudgalyayana Drama.[11] Chang Tai has described in his *Reminiscences* what a fine spectacle the Maudgalyayana Drama was when it took two to three days to stage the whole play. It was already not nearly so grand in my young days, but just like an ordinary Great Drama, starting in the evening and ending at dawn the next day. Such operas were performed to honour the gods and avert calamities, and each one had an evil-doer who met his end at dawn, when the cup of his sins was full and the King of Hell issued a warrant for his arrest. This was the point at which Wu Chang appeared on the stage.

I remember sitting in a boat below such a stage, with the audience in a different mood from usual. Generally, as the night wore on the crowd grew listless, but at this point they showed fresh interest. Wu Chang's tall paper hat which had been hanging in one corner of the stage was now carried inside, and the musicians took up a peculiar instrument and prepared to blow it lustily. This instrument looked like a trumpet, being long and slender, seven or eight feet in length; and it must have been a favourite with ghosts, for it was played only when there were ghosts on the stage. When you blew it, it blared: *Nhatu, nhatu, nhatututuu!* And we called it the Maudgalyayana trumpet.

As the crowd watched eagerly for the fall of the evil-doer, Wu Chang made his appearance. His dress was simpler than in the paintings, and he had neither chain nor abacus; he was simply an uncouth fellow all in white, with white face, red lips and knitted jet-black eyebrows, making it hard to tell whether he was laughing or crying. Upon his entrance he had to sneeze a hundred and eight times and break wind a hundred and eight times before introducing himself. I am sorry I cannot remember all he said, but one passage went something like this:

> ". . . . .
> The King of Hell issued a warrant
> And ordered me to arrest the scabby head next door.
> When I asked who he was, I found he was my cousin's son.
> His illness? Typhoid and dysentery.
> His doctor? The son of Chen Nien-yi at Hsiafang Bridge.
> His medicine? Aconite, hyssop and cinnamon.
> The first dose brought on a cold sweat,
> At the second his legs stretched stark;

---

[9] Quotations from Chen Hsi-ying.

[10] From *Mo Tzu,* compiled by the disciples of Mo Ti (c. 478-392 B.C.), the founder of the Mohist school.

[11] This depicts how the Buddhist saint Maudgalyayana went to Hell to rescue his mother.

> I said: His mother is weeping piteously,
> Why not restore him to life for a little while?
> But the king accused me of accepting a bribe;
> He had me bound and given forty strokes! . . ."

Chen Nien-yi was a famous doctor in Shaohsing, described as an immortal in the novel *Suppressing the Bandits*[12] by Yu Chung-hua. But his son does not seem so brilliant in his job.

The King of Hell also does not cut too good a figure in this description, doubting Wu Chang's honesty as he did. Still, the fact that he detected that Wu Chang's nephew had "come to life for a little while" shows him not to fall short of a "just and intelligent god." However, the punishment left our Wu Chang with an ineradicable sense of injustice. As he spoke of it he knitted his brows even more and, firmly grasping his tattered palm-leaf fan, his head hanging, he started to dance like a duck swimming in the water.

Nhatu, nhatu, nhatu-nhatu-nhatututuu! The Maudgalyayana trumpet also wailed on in protest against this unendurable wrong.

So Wu Chang made up his mind:

> "Now I shall let no man off,
> Not though he is behind a wall of bronze or iron,
> Not though he is a kinsman of the emperor! . . ."

"Though he has resentment in his heart, he does not blame the unexpected blow." He shows no mercy now. But only against his will, as a result of the King of Hell's reprimand. Of all the ghosts, he is the only one with any human feeling. If we don't become ghosts, well and good; if we do, he will naturally be the only one with whom we can be on relatively close terms.

I still remember distinctly how in my hometown, together with "low types," I often enjoyed watching this ghostly yet human, just yet merciful, intimidating yet lovable Wu Chang. We enjoyed too the grief or laughter on his face, the bravado and the quips that fell from his lips.

The Wu Chang in temple fairs was somewhat different from the one on the stage. He went through certain motions but did not speak, and tagged after a sort of clown who carried a plate of food, wanting to eat but denied food by the latter. There were two additional characters as well — what "upright gentlemen" call the "spouse and offspring." All "low types" have this common failing: they like to do to others as they would be done by. Hence they will not allow even a ghost to be lonely, but pair all ghosts and deities off. And Wu Chang was no exception. His better half was a handsome though rather countrified woman called Sister-in-Law Wu Chang. Judging by this mode of address, Wu Chang must belong to our own generation, so no wonder he gives himself no professorial airs. Then there was a boy in a smaller tall hat and smaller white clothes. Though only a child, his shoulders were already slightly hunched while the tips of his eyebrows drooped. Obviously he was Master Wu Chang, yet everyone called him Ah-ling and showed him little respect — perhaps because he was Sister-in-Law Wu Chang's son by a former husband. In that case, though, how could he look so like Wu Chang? Well, the ways of ghosts and spirits are hard to fathom, and we shall simply have to leave it at that. As for why Wu Chang had no children of his own, by this year that is easy to explain.

---

[12] A reactionary novel by Yu Chung-hua (1794-1849) describing how the peasant insurgents of Liangshan were suppressed by government troops.

Spirits can foresee the future. He must have feared that if he had many children those liable to gossip would try to prove in a devious way that *he* had accepted Russian roubles. So he not only studies birth control but practises it as well.

The scene with the food is called "The Send Off." Because Wu Chang is the summoner of spirits, the relatives of anyone who dies have to give him a farewell feast. As for not allowing him to eat, this is just a bit of fun in the temple fairs and not the case in fact. But everyone likes to have a bit of fun with Wu Chang, because he is so frank, outspoken and human. If you want a true friend, you will find few better than him.

Some say he is a man who goes to the spirit world, in other words, a human being whose spirit serves in hell while he is asleep. That is why he looks so human. I remember a man who lived in a cottage not far from my home, who claimed to be an "ambulant Wu Chang," outside whose door incense and candles were often burnt. I noticed, though, he had an unusually ghostly expression. Could it be that when he became a ghost in the nether regions his expression became more human? Well, the ways of ghosts and spirits are hard to fathom, and we shall simply have to leave it at that.

June 23

From Hundred-Plant Garden to Three-Flavour Study

Behind our house was a great garden known in our family as Hundred-Plant Garden. It has long since been sold, together with the house, to the descendants of Chu Hsi;[1] and the last time I saw it, already seven or eight years ago. I am pretty sure there were only weeds growing there. But in my childhood it was my paradise.

I need not speak of the green vegetable plots, the slippery stone coping round the well, the tall honey-locust tree, or the purple mulberries. Nor need I speak of the long shrilling of the cicadas among the leaves, the fat wasps couched in the flowering rape, or the nimble skylarks who suddenly soared straight up from the grass to the sky. Just the foot of the low mud wall around the garden was a source of unfailing interest. Here field crickets droned away while house crickets chirped merrily. Turning over a broken brick, you might find a centipede. There were stink-beetles as well, and if you pressed a finger on their backs they emitted puffs of vapour from their rear orifices. Milkwort interwove with climbing fig which had fruit shaped like the calyx of a lotus, while the milkwort had swollen tubers. Folk said that some of these had human shapes and if you ate them you would become immortal, so I kept on pulling them up. By uprooting one I pulled out those next to it, and in this way destroyed part of the mud wall, but I never found a tuber shaped like a man. If you were not afraid of thorns you could pick raspberries too, like clusters of little coral beads, sweet yet tart, with a much finer colour and flavour than mulberries.

---

[1] See note on p. 32. Here Lu Hsun only means that the family name of the purchasers was Chu.

I did not venture into the long grass, because a huge brown snake was said to inhabit the garden.

Mama Chang had told me a story:

Once upon a time a scholar was staying in an old temple to study. One evening while enjoying the cool of the courtyard he heard someone call his name. Responding he looked round and saw, over the wall, the head of a beautiful woman. She smiled, then disappeared. He was very pleased, till the old monk who came to chat with him each evening discovered what had happened. Detecting an evil influence on his face, he declared that the scholar must have seen the Beautiful-Woman Snake — a monster with a human head and snake's body who was able to call a man's name. If he answered, the snake would come that night to devour him.

The scholar was nearly frightened to death, of course; but the old monk told him not to worry and gave him a little box, assuring him that if he put this by his pillow he could go to sleep without fear.

But though the scholar did as he was told, he could not sleep — and that is hardly surprising. At midnight, to be sure, the monster came! There sounded a hissing and rustling, as if of wind and rain, outside the door. Just as he was shaking with fright, however — whizz — a golden ray streaked up from beside his pillow. Then outside the door utter silence fell, and the golden ray flew back once more to its box.

And after that? After that the old monk told him that this was a flying centipede which could suck out the brains of a snake — the Beautiful-Woman Snake had been killed by it.

The moral of this was: If a strange voice calls your name, on no account answer.

This story brought home to me the perils with which human life is fraught. When I sat outside on a summer night I often felt too apprehensive to look at the wall, and longed for a box with a flying centipede in it like the old monk's. This was often in my thoughts when I walked to the edge of the long grass in Hundred-Plant Garden. To this day I have never got hold of such a box, but neither have I encountered the brown snake or Beautiful-Woman Snake. Of course, strange voices often call my name; but they have never proved to belong to Beautiful-Woman Snakes.

In winter the garden was relatively dull; as soon as it snowed, though, that was a different story. Imprinting a snowman (by pressing your body on the snow) or building snow Buddhas required appreciative audiences; and since this was a deserted garden where visitors seldom came, such games were out of place here. I was therefore reduced to catching birds. A light fall of snow would not do: the ground had to be covered for one or two days, so that the birds had gone hungry for some time. You swept a patch clear of snow, propped up a big bamboo sieve on a short stick, sprinkled some rice husks beneath it, then tied a long string to the stick and retired to a distance to hold it, waiting for birds to come. When they hopped under the sieve, you tugged the string and trapped them. Most of those caught were sparrows, but there were white-throated wagtails too, so wild that they died in less than a day of captivity.

It was Jun-tu's[2] father who taught me this method, but I was not adept at it. Birds hopped under my sieve all right, yet when I pulled the string and ran over to look there was usually nothing there, and after long efforts I caught merely three or four. Jun-tu's father in only half the time could catch dozens which, stowed in his bag, would cheep and jostle each other. I asked him once the reason for my failure. With a quiet smile he said:

"You're too impatient. You don't wait for them to get to the middle."

I don't know why my family decided to send me to school, or why they chose the school reputed to be the strictest in the town. Perhaps it was because I had spoiled the mud wall by uprooting milkwort, perhaps because I had thrown bricks into the Liangs' courtyard next door, perhaps because I had climbed the well coping to jump off it. . . . There is no means of knowing. At all events, this meant an end to my frequent visits to Hundred-Plant Garden. Adieu, my crickets! Adieu, my raspberries and climbing figs!

A few hundred yards east of our house, across a stone bridge, was where my teacher lived. You went in through a black-lacquered bamboo gate, and the third room was the classroom. On the central wall hung the inscription Three-Flavour Study, and under this was a painting of a portly fallow deer lying beneath an old tree. In the absence of a tablet to Confucius, we bowed before the inscription and the deer. The first time for Confucius, the second time for our teacher.

When we bowed the second time, our teacher bowed graciously back from the side of the room. A thin, tall old man with a grizzled beard, he wore large spectacles. And I had the greatest respect for him, having heard that he was the most upright, honourable and erudite man in our town.

I forget where it was that I heard that Tungfang Shuo[3] was another erudite scholar who knew of an insect called *guai-zai,* the incarnation of some unjustly slain man's ghost, which would vanish if you doused it with wine. I longed to learn the details of this story, but Mama Chang could not enlighten me, for she after all was not an erudite scholar. Now my chance had come. I could ask my teacher.

"What is this insect *guai-zai,* sir?" I asked hastily at the end of a new lesson, just before I was dismissed.

"I don't know." He seemed not at all pleased. Indeed, he looked rather angry.

Then I realized that students should not ask questions like this, but concentrate on studying. Being such a learned scholar, of course he must know the answer. When he said he did not know, it meant he would not tell me. Grownups often behaved like this, as I knew from many past experiences.

---

[2] Jun-tu, whose real name was Chang Yun-shui, is mentioned in Lu Hsun's story "My Old Home." He was a peasant's son and Lu Hsun's childhood playmate.

[3] 154-93 B.C. The witty courtier and persuasive adviser of Emperor Wu Ti of the Han Dynasty who reigned from 140 to 87 B.C.

So I concentrated on studying. At midday I practised calligraphy, in the evening I made couplets.[4] For the first few days the teacher was very stern, later he treated me better; but by degrees he increased my reading assignment and the number of characters in each line of the couplets I was set to write, from three to five, and finally to seven.

There was a garden behind Three-Flavour Study too. Although it was small, you could climb the terrace there to pick winter plum, or search the ground and the fragrant osmanthus tree for the moulted skins of cicadas. Best of all was catching flies to feed ants, for that did not make any noise. But it was no use too many of us slipping out into the garden at the same time or staying out too long, for then the teacher would shout from the classroom:

"Where has everybody gone?"

Then everyone would slip back one after the other: it was no use all going back together. He had a ferule which he seldom used, and a method of punishing students by making them kneel which again he seldom used. In general, he simply glared round for a while and shouted:

"Get on with your reading!"

Then all of us would read at the top of our voices, with a roar like a seething cauldron.

We all read from different texts:

---

[4] The first step in learning to write poems in classical metres.

"Is humanity far? When I seek it, it is here."[5]

"To mock a toothless man, say: The dog's kennel gapes wide."[6]

"On the upper ninth the dragon hides itself and bides its time."[7]

"Poor soil, with good produce of the inferior sort interspersed with superior produce; its tribute, matting, oranges, pomelos."[8]

. . . .

The teacher read aloud too. Later, our voices grew lower and faded away. He alone went on declaiming as loudly as ever:

"At a sweep of his iron sceptre, all stand amazed. . . . The golden goblet brims over, but a thousand cups will not intoxicate him. . . ."[9]

I suspected this to be the finest literature, for whenever he reached this passage he always smiled, threw back his head a little and shook it, bending his head further and further back.

When our teacher was completely absorbed in his reading, that was most convenient for us. Some boys would then stage puppet shows with paper helmets on their fingers. I used to draw, using what we called "Ching-chuan paper" to trace the illustrations to various novels, just as we traced calligraphy. The more books I read, the more illustrations I traced. I never became a good student but I made not a little progress as an artist, the best sets I copied being two big volumes of illustrations, one from *Suppressing the Bandits,* the other from *Pilgrimage to the West.* Later, needing ready money, I sold these to a rich classmate whose father ran a shop selling the tinsel coins used at funerals. I hear he is now the shop manager himself and will soon have risen to the rank of one of the local gentry. Those tracings of mine must have vanished long ago.

---

[5] From the *Analects*.

[6] From the school text *Jade Forest of Sayings for the Young*.

[7] From the *Book of Changes*.

[8] From the *Book of History*.

[9] From a Ching-Dynasty narrative poem describing the arrogance of a late Tang-Dynasty prince, Li Ke-yung (856-908), at a feast.

September 18

Father's Illness

It is probably over ten years now since this story of a well-known doctor was the talk of the town in S—:

He charged one dollar forty a visit, ten dollars for an emergency call, double the amount for a night call, and double again for a trip outside the city. One night the daughter of a family living outside the city fell dangerously ill. They sent to ask him out there and, because he had more money at the time than he knew what to do with, he refused to go for less than a hundred dollars. They had to agree to this. Once there, though, he simply gave the girl a perfunctory looking over.

"It isn't serious," he said.

Then he made out a prescription, took his hundred dollars, and left.

Apparently the patient's family were very rich, for the next day they asked him out there again. The master of the house met him at the door with a smile.

"Yesterday evening we gave her your medicine, Doctor," he said, "and she's much better. So we've asked you to have another look at her."

He took him as before into the bedroom, and a maid drew the patient's hand outside the bed curtain. The doctor placed his fingers on the wrist and found it icy cold, without any pulse.

"Hmm." He nodded. "I understand this illness."

Quite calmly he walked to the table, took out a prescription form, and wrote on it: "Pay the bearer one hundred silver dollars."

Beneath he signed his name and affixed his seal.

"This illness looks rather serious, Doctor," said the master of the house, behind him. "I think the medicine should be a little more potent."

"Very well," said the doctor. And he wrote another prescription: "Pay the bearer two hundred silver dollars."

Beneath he signed his name and affixed his seal again.

This done, the master of the house put away the prescription and saw him politely out.

I had dealings with this famous physician for two whole years, because he came every other day to attend my father. Although by that time very well known, he had not yet more money than he knew what to do with; still, his fee was already one dollar forty a visit. In large towns today a ten-dollar fee is not considered exorbitant; but in those days one dollar forty was a great sum, by no means easy to raise — especially when it fell due every other day.

He probably *was* unique in some respects. It was generally agreed that his prescriptions were unusual. I know nothing about medicine: what struck me was how hard his "adjuvants" were to find. Each new prescription kept me busy for some time. First I had to buy the medicine, then look for the adjuvant. He never used such common ingredients as two slices of fresh ginger, or ten bamboo leaves minus the tips. At best it was reed roots, and I had to go to the river to dig them up; and when it came to sugar-cane which had seen three years of frost, I would have to search for two or three days at the least. But, strange to say, I believe my quest was always successful in the end.

It was generally agreed that herein lay his magic. There once was a patient whom no drugs could cure, but when he met a certain Dr. Yeh Tien-shih, all this doctor did was to add phoenix-tree leaves as the adjuvant to the old prescription. With only one dose the patient was cured. "Medicine is a matter of the mind." Because it was autumn then, and the phoenix tree is the first to feel the approach of autumn, where all other drugs had failed, Dr. Yeh could now use the spirit of autumn. When spirit reacted on spirit, the patient was thus. . . . Although this was not clear to me, I was thoroughly impressed and realized that all efficacious drugs must be difficult to get. Those who want to become immortals even have to risk their lives to go deep into the mountains to pluck the herb of long life.

After two years of his visits, I gradually came to know this famous physician fairly well; indeed we were almost friends. Father's dropsy grew daily worse, till it looked as if he would have to keep to his bed, and by degrees I lost faith in such remedies as sugar-cane which had seen three years of frost, and was not nearly as zealous as before in finding and preparing adjuvants. One day just at this time, when the doctor called, after inquiring after my father's illness he told us very frankly:

"I've used all the knowledge I have. There is a Dr. Chen Lien-ho here, who knows more than I do. I advise you to consult him. I'll write you a letter of introduction. This illness isn't serious, though. It's just that he can cure it much more quickly. . . ."

The whole household seemed rather unhappy that day, but I saw him out as respectfully as ever to his sedan-chair. When I went in again, I found my father looking very put out, talking it over with everyone and declaring that there was probably no hope for him. Because this doctor had treated the illness for two years to no purpose, and knew the patient too well, he could not help feeling rather embarrassed now that things had reached a crisis: that was why he had recommended someone else, washing his hands of the whole affair. But what else could we do? It was a fact that the only other well-known doctor in our town was Chen Lien-ho. So the next day we engaged his services.

Chen Lien-ho's fee was also one dollar forty. But whereas our first well-known doctor's face was plump and round, his was plump and long: this was one great difference between them. Their use of medicine was different too. Our first well-known doctor's prescriptions could be prepared by one person, but no single person could cope satisfactorily with Dr. Chen's because his prescriptions always included a special pill or powder or an extra-special adjuvant.

Not once did he use reed roots or sugar-cane that had seen three years of frost. Most often it was "a pair of crickets," with a note in small characters at the side: "They must be an original pair, from the same burrow." So it seems that even insects must be chaste; if they marry again after losing their mates they forfeit even the right to be used as medicine. This task, however, presented no difficulties to me. In Hundred-Plant Garden I could catch ten pairs easily. I tied them with a thread and dropped them alive into the boiling pan, and that was that. But then there was "ten ardisia berries." Nobody knew what these were. I asked the pharmacy, I asked some peasants, I asked the vendor of herb medicines, I asked old people, I asked scholars, I asked a carpenter: but they all simply shook their heads. Last of all I remembered that distant great-uncle of mine, the old fellow who liked to grow flowers and trees, and hurried over to ask him. Sure enough, he knew: the ardisia was a shrub which grew at the foot of trees deep in the mountain. It had small red berries like coral beads, and was usually known as Never-Grow-Up.

> You wear out iron shoes in hunting round,
> When all the time it's easy to be found!

Now we had the adjuvant, but there was still a special pill: broken-drum bolus. Broken-drum boluses were made from the leather of worn-out drums. Since one name for "dropsy" is "Drum-tight," the leather from worn-out drums can naturally cure it. Kangyi of the Ching Dynasty, who hated "foreign devils," acted on the same principle when he prepared to fight them by training a corps of "tiger angels," for the tigers would be able to eat the sheep, and the angels could subdue the devils.[1] Unfortunately there was only one shop in the whole town which sold this miraculous drug, and that was nearly two miles from our house. However, this was not like the case of the ardisia which we groped in the dark to find. After making out his prescription Dr. Chen Lien-ho gave me earnest and detailed instructions as to where to obtain it.

"I have one medicine," Dr. Chen told my father once, "which applied to the tongue would do you good, I'm sure. For the tongue is the intelligent sprout of the heart. . . . It is not expensive either, only two dollars a box. . . ."

---

[1] The corps of "tiger angels" was actually trained by the Manchu official Tsaiyi, not Kangyi. The Chinese character 羊 for "sheep" and that for "foreign" 洋 are homophones, so by using the symbol of tigers which eat sheep he meant that this corps could destroy the foreigners.

My father thought for some time, then shook his head.

"This present treatment may not prove too effective," said Dr. Chen another day. "I think we might ask a diviner if there is not some avenging spirit behind this. . . . A doctor can cure diseases but not fate, isn't that correct? Of course, this may be something that happened in a previous existence. . . ."

My father thought for some time, then shook his head.

All the best doctors can bring the dead to life, as we know from the placards hanging outside their houses which we see when we walk past. But now a concession has been made, for physicians themselves admit: "Western doctors are best at surgery, while Chinese doctors are best at internal medicine." But there was no Western-trained doctor in S— at that time. Indeed it had never occurred to anyone that there was such a thing in the world as a Western doctor. Hence, whenever anyone fell ill, all we could do was ask the direct descendants of the Yellow Emperor and Chi Po[2] to cure him. In the days of the Yellow Emperor, wizards and doctors were one; thus right down to the present his disciples can still see ghosts and believe that "the tongue is the intelligent sprout of the heart." This is the "fate" of Chinese, which not even famous physicians are able to cure.

When he would not apply the efficacious remedy on his tongue and could not think of any avenging spirit he had wronged, naturally it was no use my father simply eating broken-drum boluses for over a hundred days. These

---

[2] The gods of medicine in Chinese mythology.

drum pills proved unable to beat the dropsy, and finally my father lay at his last gasp on the bed. We invited Dr. Chen Lien-ho once more — an emergency call this time, for ten silver dollars. Once more, he calmly wrote out a prescription. He discontinued the broken-drum boluses, however, and the adjuvant was not too mysterious either; so before very long this medicine was ready. But when we poured it between my father's lips, it trickled out again from one side of his mouth.

That ended my dealings with Dr. Chen Lien-ho; but I sometimes saw him in the street being carried swiftly by in his fast sedan-chair with three carriers. I hear he is still in good health, practising medicine and editing a paper on traditional Chinese medicine, engaging in a struggle with those Western-trained doctors who are good for nothing but surgery.

There is indeed a slight difference between the Chinese and Western outlook. I understand that when a filial son in China knows that his parents' end is approaching, he buys several catties of ginseng, boils it, and gives it to them, in the hope of prolonging their lives a few more days or even half a day. One of my professors, whose subject was medicine, told me that a doctor's duty was to cure those who could be cured, and see to it that those who could not died without suffering. But this professor, of course, was Western-trained.

Father's breathing became very laboured, until even I could scarcely bear to hear it; but nobody could help him. Sometimes the thought flashed into my mind, "Better if it could all be over quickly. . . ." At once I knew I should not think of such a thing, in fact I felt guilty. But at the same time I felt this idea was only proper, for I loved my father dearly. Even today, I still feel the same about it.

That morning Mrs. Yen, who lived in the same compound, came in. An authority on etiquette, she told us not to wait there doing nothing. So we changed his clothes, burnt paper coins and something called the *Kaowang Sutra,*[3] and put the ashes, wrapped in paper, in his hand. . . .

"Call him!" said Mrs. Yen. "Your father's at his last gasp. Call him quickly!"

"Father! Father!" I called accordingly.

"Louder. He can't hear. Hurry up, can't you?"

"Father! Father!"

His face, which had been composed, grew suddenly tense again; and he raised his eyelids slightly, as if in pain.

"Call him!" she insisted. "Hurry up and call him!"

"Father!!!"

"What is it? . . . Don't shout. . . . Don't. . . ."

His voice was low, and once more he started panting for breath. It was some time before he recovered his earlier calm.

"Father!!!"

I went on calling until he breathed his last.

I can still hear my voice as it sounded then. And each time I hear those cries, I feel this was the greatest wrong I ever did my father.

October 7

---

[3] According to an old superstition, if this sutra was burnt and the dying man made to grasp the ashes, he would suffer less torment in Hell.

Fragmentary Recollections

Mrs. Yen has long been a grandmother, and may even be a great-grandmother; but in those days she was still young, with just one son three or four years older than myself. Though very strict with her own son, she was kind to other people's children and no matter what trouble they made would never go to tell their parents. So we all liked to play in her house or in its vicinity.

To give one example. In winter, we noticed early one morning that a thin layer of ice had formed in the water vat, and we started eating the ice. Fourth Mrs. Shen, seeing us do this, cried: "Don't eat that! It'll give you bellyache." And my mother, hearing this, rushed out to give us all a scolding; moreover, we were forbidden to play there for hours. We decided that Fourth Mrs. Shen was the root of this trouble, so we stopped referring to her respectfully and gave her a new nickname "Bellyache."

Mrs. Yen, however, never behaved like that. If she saw us eating ice, she would say with a kindly smile: "All right, have another piece. I'll keep count to see who eats most."

Yet certain things about her displeased me too. One happened very early when I was still very small. I had chanced to go into her house when she and her husband were reading a book together. When I went up to her, she thrust the book under my nose and said: "Look. What do you think this is?" I saw in the book a picture of a house in which two naked people seemed to be fighting, and yet it didn't look exactly like fighting. As I was puzzling over this, they started roaring with laughter. This annoyed me immensely, for I felt greatly insulted, and for about ten days or more I did not go back there.

Another thing happened when I was over ten, competing with some other children to see which of us could spin round the most times. From the side she kept count: "Fine, eighty-two! Another spin, eighty-three! Fine, eighty-four! . . ." But Ah-hsiang, the one spinning, suddenly fell down — just as his aunt happened to come into the room. At once Mrs. Yen said: "See, didn't I say you'd fall? You wouldn't listen to me. I told you not to do it, not to spin. . . ."

Nevertheless, children still liked to go to her place. If we knocked our heads and raised big bruises, then went to mother, she would at best give us a scolding, then rub on some ointment; but if she had no ointment we would get the scolding plus a few extra slaps. Mrs. Yen, however, never blamed us. She would promptly mix some powder with alcohol and apply this to the sore place, assuring us that this would not only stop the pain but prevent there being any scar in future.

After my father's death I went on going frequently to her house, only not to play with other children but to chat with her and her husband. At that time there were many things I would have liked to buy, things to read or eat, only I had no money. Once when I mentioned

this, she said: "Just take some from your mother. Isn't her money yours?" When I told her my mother had no money, she said I could take her trinkets to raise money on them. When I told her there were no trinkets, she said: "Perhaps you haven't looked carefully. If you search the drawers of that big chest and odd corners of the room, you're bound to find a few pearls or things of that sort. . . ."

This advice seemed to me so odd that once more I stopped going there. Sometimes, however, I was really tempted to open the big chest and make a thorough search. Probably it was less than a month after this that I heard a rumour to the effect that I'd been stealing things from home to raise money on. This really made me feel as if plunged into icy cold water. I knew the source of the rumour. Should such a thing happen now, provided I could find somewhere to publish by exposure, I would certainly unmask the rumourmonger. But at that time I was too young. When slandered, I seemed to feel myself truly guilty of some crime, afraid to meet people's eyes, afraid to receive consolation from my mother.

All right. Then leave the place!

But where could I go? I knew all the people of S— by sight, and they didn't amount to much — I seemed to have seen through them. I must find people of a different type, a type detested by the people of S—, whether they were beasts or devils. At that time the whole town was scoffing at a newly opened school called the Chinese-Western School where, in addition to Chinese, they taught foreign languages and mathematics. But already it had become a target for all. Some literati well-versed in the works of the sages even concocted a *bagu* essay by stringing together phrases from the Four Books[1] to deride it. This famous essay at once spread throughout the town, a fine topic of conversation for everyone. All I remember now is the start of the opening:

"Master Hsu said to Master Yi: I have heard of Chinese culture being used to change the barbarians, but not of us being changed by the barbarians. Now times have changed: uncouth bird-like tongues are all considered as polite languages. . . ."

What followed I forget. Doubtless similar arguments to those of the present-day champions of our national essence. However, I too was dissatisfied with that Chinese-Western School, for it taught only Chinese, mathematics, English and French. More uncommon subjects were taught in the Chiushih College in Hangchow, but its fees were high.

The schools that asked for no fees were in Nanking, so naturally I had to go to Nanking. I do not know the present name of the school I first attended.[2] I believe for a while, after the revolution, it was called the Thunder-and-Lightning School, a name reminiscent of such titles as "Primordial Ultimate Formation" or "Formless Void Formation" in the *Canonization of the Gods*.[3] Anyway, as soon as one entered Yifeng Gate one could see its flagpole, two hundred feet high, and a chimney-shaft the height of which I do not know. The lessons were simple: virtually four whole days a week were spent on English: "It is a cat." "Is it a rat?" One whole day was spent on classical Chinese: "The Superior Man comments: Ying Kao-shu should be called a man of supreme piety, for loving his mother he extended that love to the prince." One whole day was spent on writing Chinese essays: "One Who Knows His Own Strength and That of the Enemy Is Invincible in Battle," "On Ying Kao-shu," "On How Clouds Follow the Dragon and Wind the Tiger," "One Content with Chewing Cabbage Root Can Accomplish All Things Under Heaven."

When I first entered school I was naturally put in the third or lowest grade. In my cubicle were one table, one stool and one bed, this latter consisting of only two planks of wood. Students of the first and second grades were different, having two tables, two or three stools and one bed with as many as three planks. Not only did they stride with a lordly air to their classrooms, a pile of big, thick foreign books under their arms, quite unlike the third-grade students who took only one English primer and four volumes of *Tso's Commentary to the "Spring and Autumn Annals"*; even when empty-handed they would walk with arms akimbo like crabs, making it impossible for a student of a lower grade to get past. It is some time now since I last met such crab-like swells. Four or five years ago I chanced to find an old gentleman in this posture on a broken-down chaise longue in the Ministry of Education, and the fact that he was not a graduate of the Thunder-and-Lightning School shows that this crab-like attitude is quite prevalent in China.

The flagpole was fine. Not because it was "standing erect," a symbol of something, as our "Eastern Neighbour's" sinologues would say. But because it was so tall that crows and magpies could only perch on the wooden disk halfway up it. If one climbed to the top, one could see Lion Mountain nearby and Sans-Souci Lake in the distance — but whether one could really see so far, I can't actually remember clearly now. Also there was no danger, for there was a net underneath and if one fell it would only be like a small fish falling into a net. Besides, since the net had been set up there, I heard that no one had fallen.

---

[1] I.e., the Confucian classics: the *Great Learning, Doctrine of the Mean, Analects* and *Mencius,* tools used by the reactionaries to control the people's thoughts. The *bagu* essay was a stereotyped form of essay used in the official examinations during the Ming and Ching dynasties.

[2] It was the Kiangnan Naval School.

[3] A Ming-Dynasty novel about gods and demons.

There had originally also been a pool where students could learn to swim, but two young students were drowned there. By the time I went to the school the pool had been filled up, not only filled up, a small shrine to Lord Kuan Yu had been built on the spot. Beside this shrine was a brick incinerator to burn waste paper with writing on it, and over its opening was the large horizontal inscription: "Respect Written Paper." It was unfortunate though that the filling up of the pool had denied the ghosts of the two drowned students the chance to find substitutes but forced them to haunt the place, even though there was "Sagacious and Imperial Lord Kuan Yu the Conqueror of Devils" to control them. People who run schools are usually kindhearted, so each year on the fifteenth of the seventh month[4] they always engaged a troop of monks to chant masses in the gymnasium. The corpulent, red-nosed chief monk, wearing his Buddhist headdress, would chant incantations: *"Hui-zi-le, pu-mi-ye-hum! Om-ye-hum! Om! Ye! Hum!!!"*

This was the only advantage enjoyed by those classmate predecessors of ours after being suppressed for a whole year by Lord Kuan Yu — though I was not clear just where

---

[4] The Buddhist Ullambhana Festival for the deliverance of hungry ghosts.

the advantage lay. So each time this happened I used to reflect that we students had better be more careful.

It always seemed to me that something was not quite right, but I had no means of putting this into words. Now I have discovered a fairly close approximation: it seemed to me that it was "murky." So I had to leave. Nowadays it is not so easy just to leave. For "just minds and gentlemen" and the like will accuse you of getting a new contract from a college by cursing people or of posing as an "eccentric scholar," and they will pass high-minded, cutting remarks. At that time, though, it mattered less. A student's subsidy for the first year was only two taels of silver, and one got five hundred cash for expenses during the first three months on probation. So there was no problem, and I went to sit for the entrance examination of the School of Mining and Railways. At least, I think that was its name, but I cannot remember clearly, and no longer having my diploma with me I have no means of checking. The entrance test was not hard. I was accepted.

This time instead of "It is a cat," we learned "*Der Mann, Die Weib, Das Kind.*" For Chinese, in addition to "Ying Kao-shu should be called a man of supreme piety," we also studied the *Etymological Lexicon with Commentaries.*[5] Our essay subjects were slightly different too; for instance, "On the Need to Have Effective Tools to Do Good Work" was a subject we had never written on before.

Then there was physics, the science of the earth, the science of metals and stones . . . all these were quite novel. I must point out, however, that the last two were what we now call geology and mineralogy, not ancient geography or the study of bronze and stone inscriptions. Only drawing diagrams of cross-sections of rails was rather troublesome, while parallel lines were even more tiresome. The director in the second year, however, was a Reformist.[6] Riding in his carriage he would usually read the *Contemporary Gazette*,[7] and the subjects he set for Chinese examinations were quite different from those set by the teacher. Once he chose "On Washington." The disconcerted Chinese teacher had to come and ask us: "What is this thing, Washington? . . ."

---

[5] Supposedly edited by Chu Hsi in the Sung Dynasty and annotated by Chen Hsuan in the Ming Dynasty.

Then it became fashionable to read new books, and I learned that there was a book called *Evolution and Ethics.* On Sunday I went to the south city and bought it: a thick volume lithographed on fine white paper, costing five hundred cash. Opening it — it was written in fine calligraphy — I read the preface:

"Huxley, alone in his room in southern England, with mountains behind the house and plains in front, had a fine view from his window. He wondered: What was this place like two thousand years ago, before Julius Caesar came here? There must have been nothing here but primitive wasteland. . . ."[8]

Well! So the world contained a man called Huxley who sat thinking in this way in his study and came up with such novel ideas! I read the book through at one sitting, and in it I found the "survival of the fittest," and Socrates, Plato and the Stoics as well. The school had a reading-room where of course you could find the *Contemporary Gazette*; moreover, there was the magazine *Selected Translations*,[9] its title written in the style of Chang Lien-ching's[10] school of calligraphy in a most attractive blue.

"Something is wrong with you, child. Take this article and read it, then copy it out," one of my family elders ordered me sternly, passing me a newspaper. Taking it I read, "Your subject Hsu Ying-kuei begs to report. . . ." I can't remember a single sentence of that article now, but at all events it attacked Kang Yu-wei's reforms.[11] I can't remember either whether I copied the article out or not.

I still did not feel that anything was "wrong" with me. Whenever I had time, I would as usual eat cakes, peanuts and paprika and read *Evolution and Ethics.*

But we also had one very unsettled period. That was during the second year, when we heard that the school was going to be closed. This was not strange, for this school had been set up because the Governor of Kiangnan[12] and Kiangsi (probably Liu Kun-yi) had heard that the Chinglungshan coal mine had good prospects. By the time the school opened, the mine had already dismissed its engineer and replaced him with someone not so adequate. Their reasons were: first, the original engineer's salary was too high; secondly, they felt it was easy to run a coal mine. So in less than a year, the output of coal became not so adequate too, until finally it was only enough to fuel the mine's two pumps; so water was pumped to get coal, and this coal was used to pump water — the production and consumption were well balanced. Still, as the mine made no profit, there was naturally no need for a mining school. And yet, for some reason, the school was not closed. When we went down in our third year to see the pits, the sight was rather pathetic. Of course the pumps were still working, but water lay half a foot deep in the pit, more was dripping down from above, and the few miners toiling there looked like ghosts.

---

[6] One of those who favoured political reforms and learning from the West.

[7] A reformist periodical published every ten days, founded in 1896.

[8] This has been rendered from Chinese, which is a free translation of the original: "It may be safely assumed that, two thousand years ago, before Caesar set foot in southern Britain, the whole countryside visible from the windows of the room in which I write, was in what is called 'the state of nature'. . . ."

[9] Founded in Japan by Chinese students in 1900, it published translations of Western books on law and politics such as Rousseau's *Du contract social.*

[10] 1823-94. A noted calligrapher of that period.

[11] Kang Yu-wei (1858-1927), leader of the bourgeois reformists, later became a diehard royalist.

[12] The province of Kiangnan was later divided into Kiangsu and Anhwei.

Of course we all looked forward to graduation. But when the time came, we felt rather let down. We had climbed the flagpole several times, but needless to say were not half qualified to be sailors; we had attended lectures for several years and been down the pits several times, but could we mine gold, silver, copper, iron or lead? The fact was, we had no such faith ourselves, for this was not as simple as writing an essay "On the Need to Have Effective Tools to Do Good Work." We had climbed two hundred feet into the sky and burrowed two hundred feet into the earth, but the result was that we still could do nothing. Knowledge was something that "could not be found even by searching the blue sky above and the yellow springs below."[13] Only one course was left to us: to go abroad.

---

[13] From "Song of Eternal Sorrow" by the Tang poet Po Chu-yi (772-846).

The authorities approved of study abroad, and agreed to send five students to Japan. But one of these five did not go, because his grandmother wept as if it would kill her. That left just four of us. Japan was very different from China; how should we prepare ourselves? A student who had graduated a year ahead of us had been to Japan; he should know something of conditions there. When we went to ask his advice he told us earnestly:

"Japanese socks are absolutely unwearable, so take plenty of Chinese socks. And I don't think bank-notes are any good; better change all the money you take into their silver yen."

The four of us all agreed. I don't know about the others, but I changed all my money in Shanghai into Japanese silver yen, and I took with me ten pairs of Chinese socks, white cloth socks.

And later? Later we had to wear uniforms and leather shoes, so those cloth Chinese socks proved completely useless. And as they had long given up using silver coins of the one-yen denomination in Japan, I changed mine at a loss into half-yen coins and bank-notes.

October 8

Mr. Fujino

Tokyo was not so extraordinary after all. When cherry-blossom shimmered in Ueno,[1] from the distance it actually resembled light, pink clouds; but under the flowers you would always find groups of short-term "students from the Ching Empire," their long queues coiled on top of their heads upraising the crowns of their student caps to look like Mount Fuji. Others had undone their queues and arranged their hair flat on their heads, so that when their caps were removed it glistened for all the world like the lustrous locks of young ladies; and they would toss their heads too. It was really a charming sight.

In the gatehouse of the Chinese students' hostel there were always some books on sale, and it was worth going there sometimes. In the mornings you could sit and rest in the foreign-style rooms inside. But towards the evening the floor of one room would often be shaken by a deafening tramp of feet, and dust would fill the whole place. If you questioned those in the know, the answer would be: "They are learning ballroom dancing."

Then why not go somewhere else?

---

[1] A park in Tokyo.

So I went to the Medical College in Sendai. Soon after leaving Tokyo I came to a station called Nippori; somehow or other, even now I remember the name. The next place I remember was Mito, where Chu Shun-shui[2] who was loyal to the Ming Dynasty after its downfall died in exile. Sendai was a small market town, very cold in the winter, with as yet no Chinese students studying there.

No doubt the rarer a thing the higher its value. When Peking cabbage is shipped to Chekiang, it is hung upside-down in the greengrocer's by a red string tied to its root, and given the grand title "Shantung Vegetable." When the aloe which grows wild in Fukien comes to Peking, it is ushered into a hothouse and given the beautiful name "Dragon-Tongue Orchid." In Sendai I too enjoyed such preferential treatment; not only did the school not ask for fees, but several members of the staff even showed great concern over my board and lodging. At first I stayed in an inn next to the gaol, where although the early winter was already quite cold, there were still a good many mosquitoes, so I learned to cover myself completely with the quilt and wrap my clothes round my head, leaving only two nostrils exposed through which to breathe. In this area, shaken by my continuous breathing, mosquitoes could find no place to bite; thus I slept soundly. The food was not bad either. But one of our staff thought that since this inn also catered for the convicts, it was not fitting for me to stay there; and he pleaded with me earnestly time and again. Though I considered the fact that this inn also catered for the convicts had nothing to do with me, I could not ignore his kindness, so I had to look for a more fitting place. Thus I moved to another house a long way from the gaol, where unfortunately I had to drink taro tuber soup every day, which I found rather hard to swallow.

---

[2] Chu Shun-shui (1600-82) was a scholar who after the fall of the Ming Dynasty went to Japan to plan its restoration and remained there as a teacher.

After this I met many new teachers and attended many new lectures. The anatomy course was taught by two professors. First came osteology. There entered a dark, lean instructor with a moustache, who was wearing glasses and carrying under his arm a pile of books, large and small. Having set the books on the table, in slow and most measured tones he introduced himself to the class:

"My name is Fujino Genkuro. . . ."

Some students at the back started laughing. He went on to outline the history of the development of anatomical science in Japan, those books, large and small, being works published on this subject from the earliest time till then. There were first a few books in old-fashioned binding, then some Chinese translations reprinted in Japan. So they had not started translating and studying new medical science any earlier than in China.

Those sitting at the back and laughing were students who had failed the previous term and been kept down, who after one year in the college knew a great many stories. They proceeded to regale the freshmen with the history of every professor. This Mr. Fujino, they said, dressed so carelessly that he sometimes even forgot to put on a tie. Because he shivered all winter in an old overcoat, once when he travelled by train the conductor suspected him of being a pickpocket and warned all the passengers to be on their guard.

What they said was probably true: I myself saw him come to class once without a tie.

A week later, on a Saturday I think, he sent his assistant for me. I found him sitting in his laboratory among skeletons and a number of separate skulls — he was studying skulls at the time and later published a monograph on the subject in the college journal.

"Can you take notes of my lectures?" he asked.

"After a fashion."

"Let me see them."

I gave him the notes I had taken, and he kept them, to return them a day or two later with the instruction that henceforth I should hand them in every week. When I took them back and looked at them, I received a great surprise, and felt at the same time both embarrassed and grateful. From beginning to end my notes had been supplemented and corrected in red ink. Not only had he added a great deal I had missed, he had even corrected every single grammatical mistake. And so it went on till he had taught all the courses for which he was responsible: osteology, angiology, neurology.

Unfortunately, I was not in the least hard-working, and was sometimes most self-willed. I remember once Mr. Fujino called me to his laboratory and showed me a diagram in my notes of the blood vessels of the forearm. Pointing at this, he said kindly:

"Look, you have moved this blood vessel a little out of place. Of course, when moved like this it does look better; but anatomical charts are not works of art, and we have no way of altering real things. I have corrected it for you, and in future you should copy exactly from the blackboard."

I was very stubborn, however. Though I assented, I was thinking:

"My diagram was a good drawing. As for the true facts, of course I can remember them."

After the annual examination I spent the summer enjoying myself in Tokyo. By early autumn, when I went back to the college, the results had long since been published. I came halfway down the list of more than a hundred students, but I had not failed. This term Mr. Fujino's courses were practical anatomy and topographic anatomy.

After roughly a week of practical anatomy he sent for me again and, looking very gratified, said, still in the most measured tones:

"Having heard what respect the Chinese show to spirits, I was afraid you might be unwilling to dissect corpses. Now my mind is at rest, since this is not the case."

Yet sometimes too, inadvertently, he embarrassed me very much. He had heard that Chinese women had bound feet, but did not know the details; so he wanted to learn from me how it was done, how the bones in the feet were deformed. And he said with a sigh, "I should have to see it to understand. What can it really be like?"

One day the executives of the students' union of my class came to my hostel and asked to borrow my lecture notes. I found them and handed them over, but they merely looked through the notes without taking them away. As soon as they left, however, the postman delivered a bulky envelope, and when I opened it, the first line read:

"Repent!"

This was probably a quotation from the New Testament, but it had recently been used by Tolstoy. It was then the time of the Russo-Japanese War, and Count

Tolstoy wrote to both the Russian tsar and the Japanese mikado, opening his letter with this word. The Japanese papers denounced him roundly for his presumption; patriotic youths were most indignant too, though they had been influenced by him without knowing it. The rest of the letter was to the effect that the questions for our anatomy test the previous year had been marked by Mr. Fujino on my lecture notes, and it was because I knew them beforehand that I was able to pass. The letter was unsigned.

Then I recalled an incident a few days earlier. Because there was to be a meeting of our whole class, the students' executive had written an announcement on the blackboard, concluding with the words: "Please come without fail, and let there be no *leakage*." The word "leakage" was underlined. Though I thought at the time that this underlining was funny, I paid no attention to it; now I realized it was directed against me too, implying that I had got hold of the questions through some leakage on the part of our teacher.

I reported this to Mr. Fujino. A few students who knew me well were indignant too, and we protested to the executives against their rudeness in examining my notes under another pretext, and demanded that they publish the results of their investigation. So finally the rumour died, the executives tried by every means to recover that anonymous letter, and in the end I returned them their Tolstoyan missive.

China is a weak country, therefore the Chinese must be an inferior people, and for a Chinese to get more than sixty marks could not be due simply to his own efforts. No wonder they suspected me. But soon after this it was my fate to watch the execution of some Chinese. In our second year we had a new course, bacteriology. All the bacterial forms were shown in slides, and if we completed one section before it was time for the class to be dismissed, some news in slides would be shown. Naturally at that time they were all about the Japanese victories over the Russians. But in these lantern slides there were also scenes of some Chinese who had acted as spies for the Russians and were captured by the Japanese and shot, while other Chinese looked on. And there was I, too, in the classroom.

"*Banzai!*" The students clapped their hands and cheered.

They cheered everything we saw; but to me the cheering that day was unusually jarring to my ear. Later when I came back to China I saw idlers watching criminals being shot, who also cheered as if they were drunk. Alas, there is nothing one can do about it. At that time and in that place, however, it made me change my mind.

At the end of my second year I called on Mr. Fujino to tell him I was going to stop studying medicine and leave Sendai. A shadow crossed his face and he seemed on the point of speaking, but then thought better of it.

"I want to study biology, so what you have taught me, sir, will still be useful." As a matter of fact, I had no intention of studying biology; but seeing he looked rather sad I told this lie to comfort him.

"I fear subjects like the anatomy taught to medical students will not be of much help to you in the study of biology," he said with a sigh.

A few days before I left he called me to his house, gave me a photograph on the back of which he had written "Farewell," and said he hoped I would give him one of mine. Since I had no photographs at that time, he told

me to send him one later when I had taken one, and to write to him regularly to tell him how I was doing.

After leaving Sendai I did not have a photograph taken for many years, and since there was nothing gratifying in my life and telling him would only disappoint him, I did not even dare write to him. As the months and years slipped by, there was so much to tell that I felt more perplexed for words; so though sometimes I wanted to write I found it hard to begin, and I have not yet written him a single letter nor sent him a photograph. As far as he is concerned, he must think I have disappeared for good.

But somehow or other I still remember him from time to time, for of all those whom I consider as my teachers he is the one to whom I feel most grateful and who gave me the most encouragement. And I often think: the keen faith he had in me and his indefatigable help were in a limited sense for China, for he wanted China to have modern medical science; but in a larger sense they were for science, for he wanted modern medical knowledge to spread to China. In my eyes he is a great man, and I feel this in my heart, though his name is not known to many people.

I had the lecture notes he corrected bound into three thick volumes and kept them as a permanent souvenir. Unfortunately seven years ago when I was moving house, a case of books broke open on the road and half the contents were lost including these notes. I asked the transport company to make a search, but to no effect. So all I have left is his photograph which hangs on the east wall of my Peking lodging, opposite my desk. At night if I am tired and want to take it easy, when I look up and see his thin, dark face in the lamplight, as if about to speak in measured tones, my better nature asserts itself and my courage returns. Then I light a cigarette, and write some more of those articles so hated and detested by "just minds and gentlemen."

October 12

Fan Ai-nung

In our lodgings in Tokyo, we usually read the papers as soon as we got up. Most students read the *Asahi Shimbun* and the *Yomiuri Shimbun,* while those with a passion for tittle-tattle read the *Niroku Shimbun.* One morning, the first thing our eyes lit on was a telegram from China, much as follows:

"Enming, Governor of Anhwei, has been assassinated by Jo Shiki Rin. The assassin has been captured."

After the initial shock, all the students brightened up and started chatting away. They also tried to work out who the assassin was, and what were the three Chinese characters translated as Jo Shiki Rin. But everyone from Shaohsing who read anything more than textbooks had understood at once. This was Hsu Hsi-lin[1] who, after finishing his studies and returning to China, had been in charge of police administration as commissioner designate of Anhwei — he was just in the position to assassinate the governor.

---

[1] A native of Shaohsing, Hsu (1873-1907) studied in Japan and carried on revolutionary activities. In 1906 he returned to China and together with Chiu Chin planned to start a revolt in Anhwei and Chekiang. In the summer of 1907 he assassinated the governor of Anhwei, Enming, then occupied the munitions depot with a few students; but the uprising was crushed and he was killed.

Everybody went on to prophesy that he would receive the extreme penalty, and his whole clan would be involved. Not long after this, news also reached us that Miss Chiu Chin[2] had been executed in Shaohsing, and Hsu Hsi-lin's heart had been torn out, fried and eaten by Enming's bodyguards. We were furious. Some of us held a secret meeting to raise passage money, for this was where a Japanese ronin would come in useful. When he was in a jovial mood, after tearing up cuttlefish to go with his wine, he set out to fetch Hsu's family.

As usual, we also held a meeting of fellow provincials to mourn for the revolutionary martyrs and abuse the Manchu government. Then someone proposed sending a telegram to Peking to inveigh against the Manchu government's inhumanity. At once the meeting divided into two camps: those in favour of sending a telegram, and those against it. I was in favour, but after I had expressed my opinion, a deep, gruff voice declared:

"Those killed have been killed, those dead have died — what's the use of sending a stinking telegram?"

The speaker was a tall, burly fellow with long hair and more white than black to his eyes, who always seemed to be looking at people contemptuously. Squatting on the mat, he opposed almost all I said. This had struck me before as strange, and I had my eyes on him, but only now did I ask:

"Who was that last speaker, who's so cold?"

Someone who knew him told me: "That's Fan Ai-nung, one of Hsu Hsi-lin's students."

This was outrageous — the fellow was simply not human! His teacher had been murdered, yet he did not even dare send a telegram. Thereupon I absolutely insisted on sending one, and began to argue with him. The result was that those in favour of sending a telegram were in the majority, and he had to give way. The next thing was to vote for someone to draft it.

"Why bother to vote?" he asked. "Of course it should be the one who proposed sending a telegram."

I was sure this remark was also aimed at me, though it was not unreasonable. However, I declared it was essential that a composition of such a tragic nature be written by someone thoroughly familiar with the life of the martyr, for the fact that he had a closer relationship and felt more distressed and indignant than other people would certainly make his writing much more moving. So I began to argue with him again. The result was that neither he nor I drafted it. I forget who consented to draft it. The next thing was that everyone left except the man drawing up the telegram and one or two helpers who would send it off when it was written.

After that I always found this Fan Ai-nung unnatural, and most detestable. I had formerly thought the most detestable people in the world were the Manchus, but now I realized they were still secondary: the primary offender was Fan Ai-nung. If China had no revolution, no more need be said on the matter. If there was a revolution, the first thing to do was to root out Fan Ai-nung.

Later, however, my views on this subject seem by degrees to have weakened, to be finally forgotten, and after that we never met again. Not till the year before the revolution, when I was teaching in my hometown. There at the end of the spring, I think, I suddenly saw a man in a friend's house whose face looked very familiar. After staring at each other for not more than two or three seconds, we both exclaimed:

---

[2] Chiu Chin (1875-1907) also came from Shaohsing and studied in Japan. She was captured soon after Hsu's arrest.

"Why, you're Fan Ai-nung!"

"Why, you're Lu Hsun!"

I don't know why, but we both started laughing at that — laughing at ourselves and regretting the days that had gone. His eyes were still the same; but strangely enough, though only a few years had passed, he already had some white hairs. Or maybe his hair had been white all the time, only I had never noticed. Wearing a very old cloth jacket and worn-out cloth shoes, he looked extremely shabby. Speaking of his experiences, he told me he had run out of money later, so that he could not continue his studies but had to come home. After his return he had been despised, rejected and persecuted — virtually no place would have him. Now he was taking refuge in the country, making a meagre living by teaching a few small boys. But he sometimes felt so depressed that he took a boat to town.

He told me also that he now liked drinking, so we drank. After that, whenever he came to town he would look me up, till we knew each other very well. In our cups we often said such crazy, senseless things that even my mother would laugh when she happened to hear us. One day I suddenly remembered that meeting of our fellow provincials in Tokyo.

"Why did you do nothing but oppose me that day, as if deliberately?" I asked him.

"Don't you know? I always disliked you — not just I, but all of us."

"Did you know who I was before that?"

"Of course. When we arrived at Yokohama, didn't you come with Chen Tzu-ying to meet us? You shook your head over us contemptuously — don't you remember that?"

After a little thought I remembered, although it had happened seven or eight years ago. Chen Tzu-ying had called for me, saying we must go to Yokohama to meet some fellow provincials who were coming to study in Japan. As soon as the steamer arrived I saw a large group of probably more than a dozen of them. Once ashore, they took their baggage to the customhouse, and while looking through their cases the customs officer suddenly found a pair of embroidered slippers for a woman with bound feet, and set aside his public duties to pick these up and examine them curiously. I was very annoyed, and thought: "What fools these fellows must be, to bring such things with them." Without knowing what I was doing, I must have shaken my head disapprovingly. The inspection over, we sat for a short time in a hotel, then boarded the train. To my surprise, this flock of students started deferring to each other in the railway carriage. A wanted B to take this seat, B insisted on giving it up to C; and before they were through with this ceremonial the train started with a lurch, so that three or four of them promptly fell over. I was very annoyed again, and thought to myself: "Even the seats on trains they have to divide according to precedence. . . ." Without knowing what I was doing, I must have shaken my head disapprovingly again. But one of that deferential group, I realized now, was Fan Ai-nung. And in addition to Fan, I am ashamed to say, were the revolutionary martyrs Chen Po-ping who was killed in battle in Anhwei, and Ma Tsung-han, who was murdered.[3] There were one or two others as well, who were thrown into dark cells not to see the light of day till after the revolution, and who still bear the scars of their torture. But I did not know them; shaking my head I shipped them all to Tokyo. Though Hsu Hsi-lin had travelled on the same boat, he was not on this train, for he and his wife had landed at Kobe to go on by land.

I believed I must have shaken my head twice, and did not know which time they had noticed it. Since all was bustle and noise while they offered seats to each other, while all was quiet during the customs inspection, it must surely have been in the customhouse. When I questioned Ai-nung, I found this was the case.

"I really can't understand why you took such things with you. Whose were they?"

"They belonged to Mrs. Hsu, of course." He fixed me with his eyes, which were mostly whites.

"In Tokyo she'd have to pretend to have big feet. So why take them?"

"How would I know? Ask her."

As winter approached we grew more hard up; still, we went on drinking and joking. Then suddenly came the Wuchang Uprising,[4] and after that Shaohsing was liberated. The following day Ai-nung came to town in a felt cap of the type worn by peasants. I had never seen him with such a beaming face.

"Let's not drink today, Hsun. I want to see liberated Shaohsing. Come on."

So we walked through the streets, and saw white flags everywhere. But though outwardly all was changed, beneath the surface all went on as before; for this was a military government organized by a few of the old-style gentry. The chief shareholder in the railway company was head of the administration, the moneylender had become director of the arsenal. . . . And this military government did not last long, for as soon as a few youngsters raised an outcry, Wang Chin-fa[5] came in with his troops from Hangchow. In fact, he might have come even without the outcry. After his arrival, he was surrounded by a crowd of idlers and new members of the revolutionary party, and reigned supreme as Military Governor Wang. In less than ten days most of his men in the yamen, who had arrived in cotton clothes, were wearing fur-lined gowns although it was not yet cold.

My new rice bowl was the job of principal of the normal school, and Governor Wang gave me two hundred dollars to run the school. Ai-nung was supervisor of studies. He still wore his cloth gown, but did not drink very much, and seldom had time to chat. Since he gave classes in addition to his administrative duties, he worked very hard indeed.

"Wang Chin-fa and his lot are no good either," indignantly announced a young visitor who had attended my lectures the previous year. "We want to start a newspaper to keep a check on them. But we'll have to use your name, sir, as one of the sponsors. Another is Mr.

---

[3] Chen Po-ping (1882-1907) and Ma Tsung-han (1884-1907) both studied in Japan and on their return to China joined the uprising organized by Hsu Hsi-lin.

[4] This took place on October 10, 1911, and was the beginning of the 1911 Revolution.

[5] Leader of a secret society in Chekiang who joined the revolutionary Kuang Fu Hui and, during the 1911 Revolution, led his men to Shaohsing and made himself military governor.

Chen Tzu-ying, and another is Mr. Sun Teh-ching.[6] We know you won't refuse, since it's for the public good."

I gave my consent. Two days later I saw a leaflet announcing the appearance of this paper, and sure enough there were three sponsors. Five days later the newspaper came out. It began by denouncing the military government and its members, after which it denounced the governor and his relatives, fellow provincials and concubines. . . .

After more than ten days of such abuse, word came to my house that because we had tricked money out of the governor and denounced him, he was going to send a gunman to shoot us.

Nobody took this seriously except my mother, who was very worried and begged me not to go out. I went out as usual, however, explaining to her that Wang Chin-fa would not be coming to shoot us; for although he came out of the bandits' school, he didn't kill people lightly. Besides, the money I took from him was to run the school — he should at least know that — he didn't mean what he said.

Sure enough, no one came to shoot us. When I wrote and asked for more funds, I received another two hundred dollars. But Governor Wang seemed to be rather offended, for he informed me: "This is the last time!"

Ai-nung heard some fresh news, however, which did upset me. The reference to "tricking" money had not meant the school funds but a separate sum given to the newspaper office. After the paper had come out for several days filled with abuse, Wang Chin-fa sent a man

---

[6] An enlightened landlord who joined the anti-Ching revolutionary movement.

there to pay them five hundred dollars. Then our youngsters held a meeting.

The first question was: "Shall we accept this or not?"

The decision was: "Accept it."

The second question was: "Shall we go on denouncing him after accepting this?"

The decision was: "We shall."

The reason was: "Once we have accepted his money, he becomes a shareholder; and if a shareholder behaves badly, of course we must denounce him."

I went straight to the newspaper office to find out whether this was true or not. It was. I reproached them mildly for accepting the governor's money, but the one called the accountant was offended.

"Why shouldn't a newspaper accept shares?" he demanded.

"These aren't shares. . . ."

"If they aren't shares, what are they?"

I did not say any more. I had enough experience of the world for that. If I had pointed out that this was involving us, he would have abused me for caring so much for my worthless life that I was unwilling to sacrifice myself for the public good; or the next day the paper might have carried an account of how I had trembled in my fear of death.

But then, by a fortunate coincidence, Hsu Chi-fu sent me a letter urging me to go at once to Nanking. Ai-nung was all in favour, though extremely depressed as well.

"Things have grown so bad again, you can't stay here," he said. "You'd better leave at once. . . ."

I understood what he left unsaid, and decided to go to Nanking. First I went to the governor's yamen to tender my resignation, which was naturally accepted, then a snivelling functionary was sent to the school to take over. Having handed over the accounts and the ten cents and two coppers in hand, I ceased to be the principal. My successor was Fu Li-chen, head of the Confucian League.

I heard the end of the newspaper affair two or three weeks after reaching Nanking — the office had been smashed up by the soldiery. Since Chen Tzu-ying was in the country, he was all right; but Sun Teh-ching, who happened to be in town, received a bayonet wound in his thigh. He flew into a fury. Of course, one could hardly blame him — it was rather painful. After his fury subsided, he took off his clothes and had a photograph taken to show the wound which was about an inch across; he also wrote an account of what had happened, which he circulated everywhere, to expose the tyranny of this military government. I doubt if anyone has kept that photograph. It was so small that the wound was practically invisible, and without an explanation anyone seeing it would be bound to take it for a nudist photograph of some rather eccentric and romantic fellow. Indeed, if it came to the notice of the warlord general Sun Chuan-fang,[7] it would very likely be banned.

By the time I moved from Nanking to Peking, the principal who was head of the Confucian League had contrived to remove Ai-nung from his post as supervisor of studies. He was once more the Ai-nung of pre-revolutionary days. I wanted to find a small post for him in Peking, which was what he longed for, but there was no opening. Later he went to live on a friend, and I often heard from him. He grew poorer and poorer, and sounded more and more bitter. At last he was forced to leave this friend's house and drift from place to place. Before long I heard from a fellow provincial that he had fallen into the river and been drowned.

I suspected he had committed suicide. For he was an excellent swimmer: it would not be easy for him to drown.

At night, sitting in the hostel feeling thoroughly depressed, I doubted whether this news could be true; but somehow I still felt it must be reliable, although I had received no confirmation. There was nothing I could do but write four poems which were printed later in some paper, but which I have now nearly forgotten. All I can remember are six lines of one poem. The first four were:

How often I discussed our times over wine
With you who drank but little;
In a world blind drunk
A mere tippler might well drown. . . .

The two lines in the middle have slipped my memory, but the last two were:

Like scattering clouds my friends have gone,
And I am but a grain of dust in the wind.

Later, when I went home, I learned more details of the story. First, Ai-nung could find no work of any description, because everybody disliked him. He was very hard up indeed, but he went on drinking whenever friends treated him. He had very little to do with other people by this time, and the only ones he saw much of were a few rather young men he had got to know afterwards; but they did not want to hear his complaints all the time — they liked his jokes better.

"I may get a telegram tomorrow," he used to say. "When I open it, I'll find Lu Hsun has sent for me."

---

[7] A Northern warlord who prohibited the use of human models in art schools in Shanghai on the grounds of preserving Confucian morality.

One day, a few new friends invited him to go by boat to watch an opera. It was after midnight by the time they started back, and there was high wind and rain. He was drunk, yet he insisted on standing on the bulwarks. And when his friends protested, he would not listen to them. He assured them he could not fall. Fall he did, though, and although he could swim he did not come to the surface.

The next day they recovered his body. They found him standing upright in a creek where water chestnuts grew.

To this day I do not know whether he lost his balance or committed suicide.

He had no money at all when he died, but he left behind a widow with a young daughter. Some people thought of starting a fund for his daughter's future schooling; but as soon as this was proposed, various members of his clan started squabbling as to who should control this sum, although it had not yet been collected. Then everyone was so disgusted that the scheme just came to nothing.

I wonder how his only daughter is faring now? If she is studying, she ought to have graduated from secondary school by this time.

November 18

Postscript

At the start of my third essay on *The Twenty-Four Acts of Filial Piety*, I said that the term *Ma-hu-tzu* used in Peking to frighten children should be "Ma the Hun" because it referred to Ma Shu-mou, whom I took to be a Hun. I now find I was wrong. Hu was General Ma Shu-mou's first name. This appears in *Notes for Idle Moments*[1] by Li Chi-weng of the Tang Dynasty. The section entitled "Refuting the View That Ma Shu-mou Was a Hun" reads as follows:

> "Common people frighten children by saying, 'Ma-hu-tzu is coming!' Those not knowing the origin of this saying imagine Ma as a god with a big beard who is a harsh investigator of people's crimes; but this is wrong. There was a stern, cruel general of Sui called Ma Hu, to whom Emperor Yang Ti entrusted the task of building the Grand Canal at Pienliang. So powerful was he that even children stood in awe of him and would frighten each other by saying, 'Ma-hu-tzu is coming!' In their childish prattle the Hu changed into Hun.
>
> This is just like the case of General Hao Pin of the prefecture of Ching in the reign of Emperor Hsien Tsung, who was so feared by the barbarians that they stopped their children from crying by scaring them with his name. Again, in the time of Emperor Wu Tsung, village children would threaten

---

[1] A collection of anecdotes on ancient history and relics.

> each other, 'Prefect Hsueh is coming!' There are various similar instances, as is proved by the account in the *Wei Records* of Chang Liao being invoked as a bogeyman." (Author's note: Ma Hu's Temple is in Suiyang. Li Pi, Governor of Fufang, who was his descendant, had a new tablet erected and inscribed there.)

So, I, in my understanding, was just like "those not knowing the origin of this saying" in the Tang Dynasty, and I truly deserved to be jeered at by someone a thousand years ago. All I can do is laugh wryly. I do not know whether this tablet is still at Ma Hu's Temple in Suiyang or whether the inscription has been kept in the local records or not. If they still exist, we should be able to see his real achievements, which would be the opposite of those described in the story *Record of the Construction of the Canal.*

Because I wanted to find a few illustrations, Mr. Chang Wei-chun collected a wealth of material for me in Peking, among it a few books which I had never seen. These included *Picture-Book of Two Hundred and Forty Filial Acts* by Hu Wen-ping of Suchow, published in 1879, the fifth year of Kuang Hsu. The word "forty" was written 卌 and there was a note to the effect that this should be pronounced *xi.* Why he went to such trouble instead of simply writing "forty" passes my understanding. As to that story to which I objected about Kuo Chu burying his child alive, he had already cut it a few years before I was born. The preface says:

> ". . . *The Twenty-Four Acts of Filial Piety* brought out by the publishers is an excellent book, but its account of Kuo Chu burying his son is not a good example to follow, according neither with reason nor human feeling. . . . I have rashly taken it upon myself to bring out a new edition, weeding out all those stories which aim at winning a name by exceeding proper limits, and choosing only those which do not deviate from the rules of propriety and which can be taken as examples by all. These I have grouped into six categories."

The courage of this old Mr. Hu from Suchow is certainly admirable. But I think many people must have shared his views, from way back too, only probably lacked the courage to make bold cuts or commit their views to writing. Take for instance the *Picture-Book of a Hundred Filial Acts*[2] published in 1872, the eleventh year of Tung Chih, with a preface by Cheng Chi (alias Cheng Chi-chang) which says:

> ". . . Now that morality is going to the dogs and the old customs are being undermined, forgetting that filial piety is human nature people regard it as something quite apart. They pick out stories of men of bygone days throwing themselves into furnaces[3] or burying children alive and dub them as cruel and irrational, or accuse those who cut flesh from their thighs or disembowelled themselves of injuring the body given them by their parents. They do not realize that filial piety is a matter of feeling, not of outward forms. It has no fixed forms, no fixed observances. The filial piety of ancient times may not suit present needs; we today can hardly model ourselves on the ancients. For the time and place have changed, and different people will perform different deeds although all alike wish to be filial. Tzu-hsia[4] said that a man should put his whole strength into serving his parents. So if people asked Confucius how to be filial his answer would vary according to different cases. . . ."

From this it is clear that in the reign of Tung Chih some people considered such acts as burying a child alive as "cruel and irrational." As for this Mr. Cheng Chi's personal views, I am not too clear about them. He may have meant that we need not follow such old examples but at the same time need not consider them wrong.

---

[2] Compiled by Yu Pao-chen and illustrated by Yu Tai in the Ching Dynasty.

[3] The father of Li Ngo was ordered by the King of Wu (222-80) to forge metal. He failed and faced punishment by death. Then his daughter, aged fifteen, in despair threw herself into the furnace, whereupon the metal was successfully forged.

[4] Tzu-hsia (507-? B.C.) was a disciple of Confucius.

The origin of this *Picture-Book of a Hundred Filial Acts* is rather unusual: it was the result of reading *New Poems on a Hundred Beauties*[5] by a man called Yen from eastern Kwangtung. Whereas Yen laid stress on female charm, the author laid stress on filial piety, showing splendid zeal in championing morality. However, though this book was compiled by Yu Pao-chen (alias Yu Lan-pu) of Kuei-chi, in other words, a man from my own district, I still have to say frankly that it is not up to much. For example, in a note to the story about Mu-lan joining the army in her father's place,[6] he ascribed it to the "Sui Shi" (Sui Dynasty History). No book of this name exists. If he meant the *Sui Shu* (*Records of Sui*), that work has no reference to Mu-lan joining the army.

Still this book was reprinted in a lithographic edition by a Shanghai publisher in 1920, the ninth year of the republic, under the amplified title *Complete Edition of the Picture-Book of a Hundred Filial Acts by Men and Women.* And on the first page, in small print, were the words: Good models for family education. There was also an additional preface by a certain Wang Ting (alias Wang Ta-tso) of Soochow, which started off with a lament similar to the views of Mr. Cheng Chi of the Tung Chih reign:

---

[5] An illustrated book of poems by Yen Hsi-yuan of the eighteenth century. The pictures showed a hundred beauties of ancient times.

[6] This story appeared as a popular ballad round about the sixth century, but was never recorded in official histories.

> "Ever since European influence spread east, scholars within the Four Seas have been advocating freedom and equality, so that morality has daily declined and men's hearts are becoming daily more depraved, unscrupulous and shameless, making them do all manner of evil, running risks and trusting to luck to get ahead. Few indeed are the men of integrity who have scruples and will not lower themselves. . . . I see that this world's irrational cruelty is well-nigh as bad as the heartlessness of Chen Shu-pao.[7] If this tendency goes unchecked, what will our end be? . . ."

Chen Shu-pao may actually have been so stupid that he seemed completely "heartless," but it is rather unfair to drag him in as an example of irrational cruelty, when such terms had been used by others to describe Kuo Chu's burying his son and Li Ngo throwing herself into a furnace.

In some ways, however, people's hearts do seem to be growing more depraved. Ever since the publication of *Secrets Between Men and Women* and *New Treatise on Intercourse Between Men and Women,* many books published in Shanghai use "men and women" in their titles. So now these words have been added even to the *Picture-Book of a Hundred Filial Acts* which was published to "rectify men's minds and improve their morals." This is probably something never expected by Mr. Yu Pao-chen of Kueichi, who because of his dissatisfaction with the *New Poems on a Hundred Beauties* preached filial piety.

To depart suddenly from filial piety, "the foremost of all virtues," to drag in "men and women" may seem rather frivolous if not depraved. Still, I would like to take this chance to say a few words on this subject. Of course, I shall try to be brief.

---

[7] Chen Shu-pao (553-604) was the last king of Chen (557-89) in the Six Dynastics Period. People called him heartless because he did not take affairs of state seriously and had no sense of shame, not because he was harsh and cruel.

We Chinese, I dare say, even when it comes to "the foremost of all virtues," may sometimes start thinking of men and women too. The world is at peace, so idle people abound. Occasionally some "kill themselves for a noble cause" and may be too busy themselves to bother about other matters, but onlookers who remain alive can always carry out detailed researches. Official histories relate, and it is quite commonly known, that Tsao Ngo jumped into the river to look for her father, and after drowning herself still carried his corpse out. The problem is: *How* did she carry his corpse?

When I was small, I heard elders in my hometown explain it this way:

". . . At first, the dead Tsao Ngo and her father's corpse floated up to the surface with her clasping him, face to face. But passers-by seeing this laughed and said: 'Look, such a young girl with her arms round such an old man!' Then the two corpses sank back into the water. After a little they floated up again, this time back to back."

Fine! According to the records, "Ngo was only fourteen." But in this realm of propriety and righteousness, even for so young a dead filial daughter to float up from the water with her dead father is very, very hard.

I looked up the *Picture-Book of a Hundred Filial Acts* and *Picture-Book of Two Hundred and Forty Filial Acts.* In both cases the artists were clever: they had only drawn Tsao Ngo weeping on the bank before jumping into the river. But the 1892 edition of *The Picture-Book of Twenty-Four Filial Women* illustrated by Wu Yu-ju[8] showed the scene of the two corpses floating up, and he had made them "back to back" as we see in the uppermost of the first illustrations. I expect he had heard the same story that I did. Then there is the *Supplementary Picture-Book of Twenty-Four Filial Acts* also illustrated by Wu Yu-ju, in which Tsao Ngo is again presented, this time in the act of plunging into the river, as we see in the lower of the first illustrations.

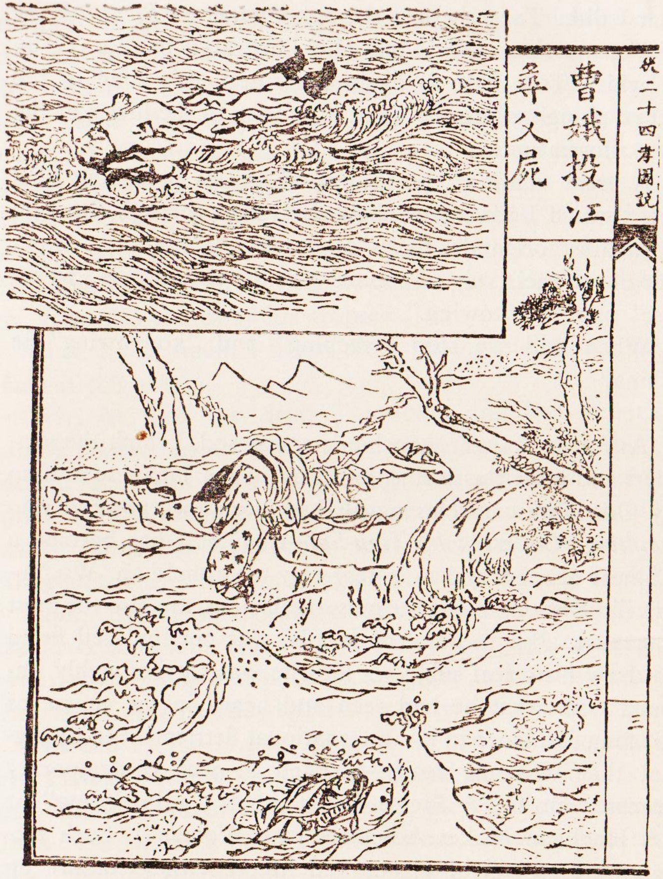
A great many of the illustrated stories preaching filial piety which I have seen show filial sons through the ages up against brigands, tigers or hurricanes, and nine times out of ten their way of coping with the situation is "weeping" and "kowtowing."

When will we stop "weeping" and "kowtowing" in China?

As far as draughtsmanship is concerned, I think the simplest and most classical style is that of the Japanese edition by Oda Umisen. Having already been incorporated into *Paintings Collected by Tien-Shih-Chai,* this has become a Chinese product and so is very easy to get hold of. Wu Yu-ju's illustrations, being the most meticulous, are also the most engaging. But in point of fact he was not too well fitted to draw historical subjects. For he was so thoroughly imbued with what he had seen and heard in the course of his long residence in the International Settlement in Shanghai that what he really excelled at was contemporary scenes such as "A Fierce Bawd Abuses a Prostitute" or "A Hooligan Makes Advances to a Woman." Such pictures are so full of vigour and life that they conjure up before us the International Settlement in Shanghai. However, Wu's influence was deplorable. You will find that in the illustrations of many recent novels or children's

---

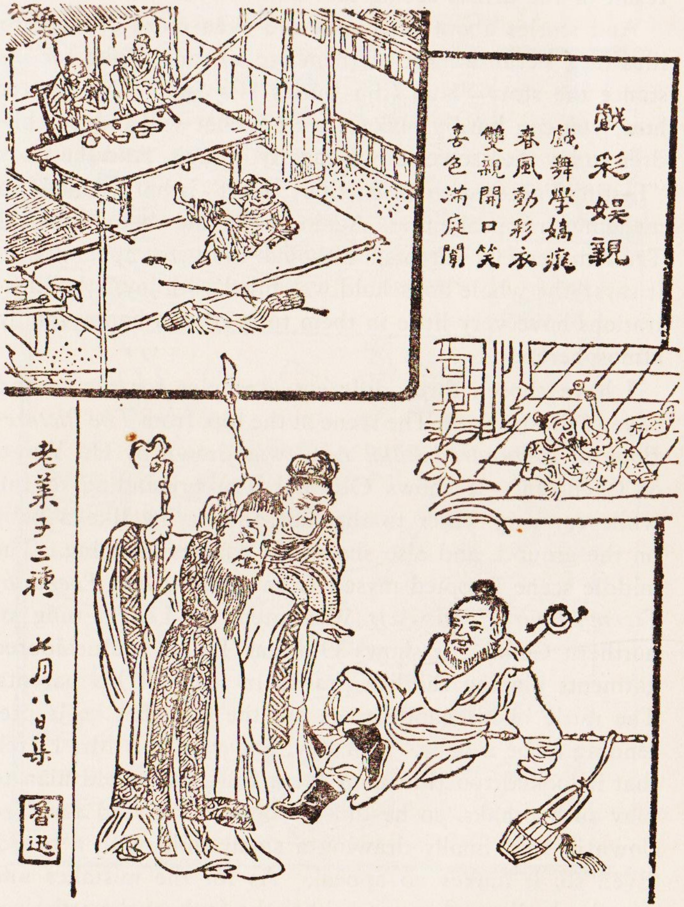
[8] An illustrator flourishing towards the end of the Ching Dynasty.


狀二十四孝圖說
曹娥投江
尋父屍
三

books all the women are drawn like prostitutes, all the children like young hooligans, and this is very largely the result of the artists seeing too many of his illustrations.

And stories about filial sons are even more difficult to illustrate, because most of them are so sad. Take for instance the story "Kuo Chu Buries His Son." No matter how, you can hardly make a picture that will induce children to lay themselves down eagerly in a pit. And the story "Tasting Faeces with an Anxious Heart" is hardly likely to make much appeal either. Again, in the tale about "Old Lai Tzu Amuses His Parents," although the verse appended to it says "the whole household was filled with joy," the illustrations have very little in them to suggest a happy family atmosphere.

I have chosen three different examples for the second page of illustrations. The scene at the top, from *The Picture-Book of a Hundred Filial Acts,* was drawn by Ho Yun-ti of Chentsun. It shows Old Lai Tzu pretending to fall while carrying water to the hall and crying like a baby on the ground, and also shows his parents laughing. The middle scene I copied myself from *Pictures and Poems of Twenty-Four Filial Acts* illustrated by Li Hsi-tung of northern Chihli. It shows Old Lai Tzu in multicoloured garments playing childish pranks in front of his parents. The rattle in his hand brings out the fact that he is pretending to be a baby. Probably, however, this Mr. Li felt that it looked too ridiculous for a fully grown old man to play such pranks, so he did his best to cut Old Lai Tzu down in size, finally drawing a small child with a beard. Even so, it makes no appeal. As for the mistakes and gaps in the lines, they are neither the fault of the artist nor mine as copyist; one can only blame the engraver who in 1873, the twelfth year of Tung Chih in the Ching Dynasty,


戲彩娛親
戲舞學嬌癡
春風動彩衣
雙親開口笑
喜色滿庭闈
老萊子三種
七月八日集
魯迅

worked in the Hung-Wen-Tang Printing Shop on the west side of the southern end of Puchengssu Street in the Province of Shantung. The bottom picture on this page was printed by the Shen-Tu-Shan-Fang Shop in 1922, the eleventh year of the republic, without giving the artist's name. The illustration contains two episodes — pretending to fall and playing pranks like a baby — but leaves out the "multicoloured garments." Wu Yu-ju's illustration also combines both episodes; and he has also left out the multicoloured garments, but although his Old Lai Tzu is plumper and has his hair in two knots — he still looks unattractive.

It has been said that the difference between satire and invective is only paper-thin, and I think the same applies to winsomeness and mawkishness. A child playing pranks before its parents can be winsome, but if a grown man does this it cannot but be distasteful. A careless married couple displaying their mutual fondness in public can easily become embarrassing if they slightly overstep the bounds of what is amusing. It is no wonder, then, that no one could draw a good picture of Old Lai Tzu playing pranks. I could not be comfortable, even for a day, living in a family such as these pictures show. Just think. How can this old gentleman in his seventies spend all his time playing hypocritically with a rattle?

People of the Han Dynasty liked to have paintings or carved reliefs of rulers of old, disciples of Confucius, eminent scholars and ladies and filial sons in their palaces or the stone chambers before their tombs. Of course none of those palaces are left today, but occasionally such stone chambers can be seen. The one best preserved is the Wu family stone chamber in Chiahsiang County, Shantung. I seem to remember that it has a relief depicting the story of Old Lai Tzu. But since I do not have the rubbings with me, and have no copy of the book *Collected Inscriptions on Stone and Metal*[9] either, I cannot verify this. Otherwise it would be most interesting to compare modern illustrations with those done about eighteen hundred years ago.

Regarding Old Lai Tzu's story, there is the following account in the *Picture-Book of a Hundred Filial Acts:*

> ". . . Old Lai Tzu also played with a *chu* (雛) to amuse his parents. He romped with this at their side to divert them." (Author's note: from *Lives of Lofty Characters.*)

Whose *Lives of Lofty Characters* did he mean? That by Chi Kang? Or that by Huangfu Mi? Again I had no books where I could look this up. Recently, however, on receiving one extra month's pay I decided to buy a set of *The Imperial Encyclopedia of the Taiping Era.* But on looking through this, I still failed to find the source. So either I did not look carefully enough, or else the anecdote must come from some other Tang or Sung book. Not that this really matters. What struck me as interesting in the text was the word *chu.*

It seems to me that *chu* here may not mean a fledgeling. Dolls made of clay, silk or cloth as children's toys are called *hina* in Japanese, and the character for this is the same as *chu.* They have retained not a few old Chinese characters over there; and for Old Lai Tzu to play with a child's toy before his parents sounds more natural than playing with a little bird. What in English is called a "doll" we in China today call a *yang-nue-nue* or *nirenr* but we have to write this with the characters *kui-lei* (puppet). So perhaps our ancestors called it *chu* but later

---

[9] Reproductions of more than one thousand five hundred ancient inscriptions compiled by Wang Chang in the Ching Dynasty.

this word was lost and only preserved in Japan. However, this is just my hypothesis for the time being. I have not as yet found substantial evidence.

It seems that nobody ever drew a picture of Old Lai Tzu playing with a doll.

Another set of books I collected was those with pictures of Wu Chang or Life-Is-Transient. One is *Cautionary Records of the Jade Calendar* (or the word "cautionary" may be omitted), another is *Most Treasured Records of the Jade Calendar.* Actually the contents are almost identical. Regarding the collecting of these books I must first of all thank Mr. Chang Wei-chun who sent me the Lung-Kuang-Chai and Chien-Kuang-Chai editions printed in Peking, the Ssu-Kuo-Chai and Lithographic Printing Shop editions printed in Tientsin, and the Li-Kuang-Ming-Chuang edition printed in Nanking. Next my thanks are due to Mr. Chang Mao-chen who gave me the Ma-Nao-Ching-Fang edition printed in Hangchow, the Hsu-Kuang-Chi edition printed in Shaohsing, and the most recent lithographic edition. Then I myself procured the Pao-Ching-Ko edition printed in Kwangchow and the Han-Yuan-Lou edition.

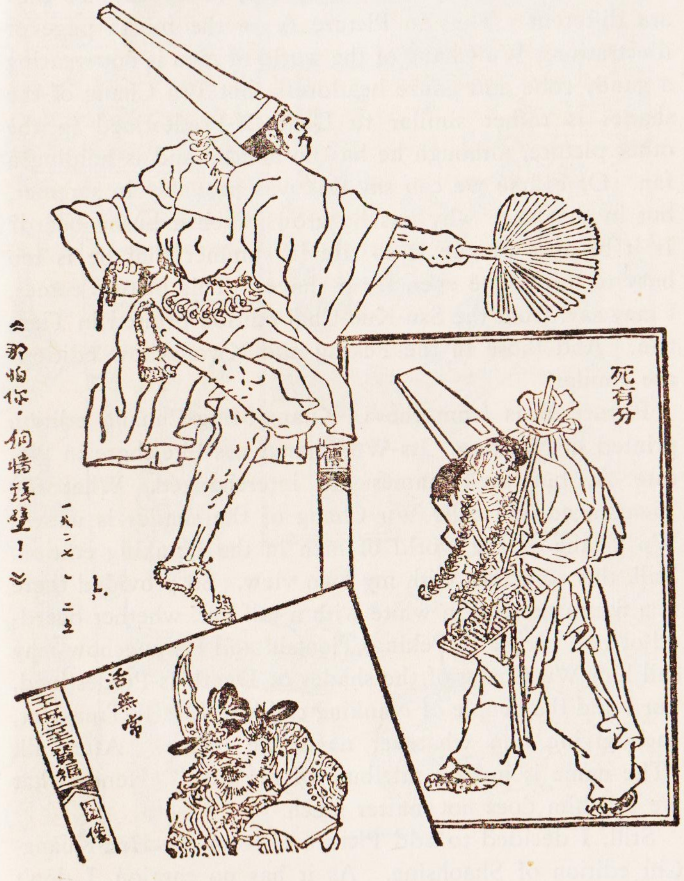
There are two kinds of these *Jade Calendars,* one comprehensive and the other briefer, as I stated earlier. But a study of all the pictures of Wu Chang started me worrying. For in these books Wu Chang or Life-Is-Transient wears a gaudy robe and gauze headdress, and has a sword fastened on his back; while the ghost with the abacus and tall conical hat is Death-Is-Predestined! Though their faces may be fierce or kind, and they may be wearing straw sandals or cloth (?) shoes, these discrepancies merely depend on the whim of the artist; but the important thing, which all have in common, is that they are called Death-Is-Predestined. Alas, this was clearly done to make things awkward for me.

Still I am not convinced. In the first place, none of these books is the edition I saw in my childhood; in the second, I still believe that my memory is not at fault. However, my scheme of tearing off a single page to serve as an illustration was quietly but completely frustrated. All I could do was to pick an example of each — one Death-Is-Predestined from a Nanking edition and one Life-Is-Transient from a Kwangchow edition, in addition I had to set to work myself to sketch by way of substitute the Life-Is-Transient I remembered from Maudgalyayana dramas or temple fairs, for the upper part of the third page of illustrations. Luckily I am not a professional artist, so, although the sketch is not too good, readers should not be too critical. Lacking foresight I commented disrespectfully on Mr. Wu Yu-ju and his confrères, little thinking I should have to make a fool of myself so shortly after. So I am saying a few words of apology here in advance. But if my apology is not accepted, I can only imitate President Hsu Shih-chang's[10] philosophy: let things take their natural course.

Another thing of which I am not convinced is this: Do those gentlemen who boost the *Jade Calendar* really have a clear understanding of the nether regions? For example, there are two kinds of illustrations of the scene at a man's death; one shows simply a ghost guard armed with a steel trident, known as the Summoner of Ghosts, and nobody

---

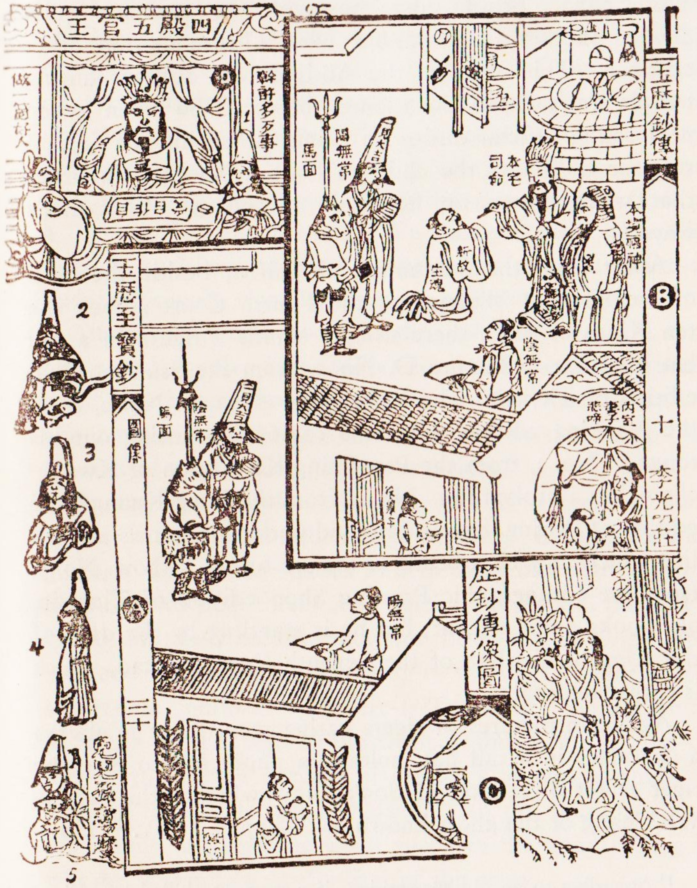
[10] An official of the Ching government and a scheming bureaucrat, he became president of the Northern warlord government from 1918 to 1922.



else; one shows a horse-faced devil and two Wu Changs — Wu Chang of the world of men and Wu Chang of the shades — but these are not Life-Is-Transient and Death-Is-Predestined. If you say they are, in appearance they are different. Thus in Picture A on the fourth page of illustrations, Wu Chang of the world of men is not wearing a gaudy robe and gauze headdress; but Wu Chang of the shades is rather similar to Death-Is-Predestined in the other picture, although he has no abacus and is holding a fan. Of course we can say this was probably in summer, but in that case why has he grown such a bushy beard? Is it because plague is so rife in summer that he is too busy to have time even for a shave? This picture comes, I may say, from the Ssu-Kuo-Chai edition printed in Tientsin. And those in the Peking and Kwangchow editions are similar.

Picture B is from the Li-Kuang-Ming-Chuang edition printed in Nanking. Its Wu Changs are like those in Picture A, but their names are interchanged. What the Tientsin edition calls Wu Chang of the shades is named Wu Chang of the world of men in the Nanking edition. Still, this coincides with my own view. So provided there is a figure dressed in white with a tall hat, whether bearded or not, people in Peking, Tientsin and Kwangchow may call him Wu Chang of the shades or Death-Is-Predestined, but I and the people of Nanking call him Life-Is-Transient, each giving him whatever name we please. After all, "The name is just an attribute of the fact." Hence what we call him does not matter much.

Still, I decided to add Picture C from the Hsu-Kuang-Chi edition of Shaohsing. As it has no caption, I don't know the artist's intention. When I was small I used to pass that printing shop and sometimes watched them



engraving these pictures. As they preferred to draw circles and straight lines, seldom curved lines, from their version it is hard to judge the true appearance of Mr. Wu Chang. Beside him, however, we can see quite clearly another little tall-hat who is absent from other editions. This must be the Ah-ling who appears during temple fairs, as I mentioned before. So even when performing official duties he brings along his son (?). I suppose he wants the child to learn from him, in order that when grown up he "will not change his father's ways."

Apart from the Summoner of Spirits, beside the desk of the King of Wukuan of the Fourth Court among the ten Kings of Hell, there usually stands a figure in a tall hat like that in Picture D, No. 1, from the Ssu-Kuo-Chai edition of Tientsin, who looks quite elegant. No. 2, from the Nanking edition, for some reason is sticking out his tongue. No. 3, from the Pao-Ching-Ko edition of Kwangchow, has a broken fan. No. 4, from the Lung-Kuang-Chai edition of Peking, has no fan, and under his chin is a black line which may be a beard or tongue for all I know. No. 5, from the Lithographic Printing Shop edition of Tientsin, also looks quite elegant; but he is standing by the desk of the King of Taishan of the Seventh Court instead, which is rather unusual.

Again, in pictures of tigers eating men, there is always a character in a tall hat, holding a paper fan to give the tiger secret directions. I don't know whether this is also Wu Chang or the ghost known as "Chang" （伥）.[11] However, in the operas in my home district, the "Chang" ghost does not wear a tall hat.

Researches into such esoteric matters as the lore of spirits and the supernatural, not being verifiable by facts, are most original and highly advantageous too. If I put all the materials together, started a scholarly discussion, and compiled and printed all the correspondence of different sorts received, I dare say I could produce three or four massive volumes and by so doing rise to the rank of a "scholar." Still, the title "Wu-chang-ologist" lacks distinction, so I have no wish to pursue my researches further and will simply conclude here in arbitrary fashion:

The ideas in such books as the *Jade Calendar* are very crude and simple: Life-Is-Transient and Death-Is-Predestined together symbolize the life of man. When a man is about to die only Death-Is-Predestined need turn up, for his arrival shows that "life is transient."

Among the people, however, is also a type of self-styled "messenger for the nether regions," living men who go for a time to the shades to help carry out official tasks. Because they help to summon spirits, people call them Wu Chang too; and because they are the spirits of living men they are designated as belonging to the world of men, and so become confused with Life-Is-Transient. Thus Picture A in the fourth page of illustrations shows Wu Chang of the world of men dressed in ordinary human costume to indicate that he is just a messenger to the shades, whose job is only to guide the ghost guard to the house. This is why he is standing at the foot of the steps.

Since there is a Wu Chang who is a living man's spirit who goes to the nether regions, Death-Is-Predestined is known as Wu Chang of the shades, as he has similar tasks but is not of the world of men.

---

[11] According to an old superstition, if a man was killed by a tiger his ghost had to find other people for the tiger to eat. Such a ghost was called a *Chang,* and this term was used to describe the lackeys serving a despot.

Though the Maudgalyayana dramas and temple processions were designed to appease the gods, they serve as entertainment too. If the character playing the part of the live messenger to the shades were to dress as an ordinary man it would look too uninteresting, for then it would not be a masquerade. It is better to make him more bizarre-looking. This is why he is dressed in the costume of the other Wu Chang — of course, what this is people never knew too clearly. And in this way the mistake was perpetuated. So what people in Nanking and I call Life-Is-Transient is really the living messenger to the shades wearing the costume of Death-Is-Predestined while using the name Life-Is-Transient. This is utterly counter to classical lore and most preposterous.

Would the erudite gentlemen of China agree with my conclusions?

I had no intention at first of writing a postscript. I just wanted to find a few old pictures as illustrations and didn't expect to get off the track. While making comparisons of the pictures, cutting out and pasting together specimens, I have made my random comments. The text of the reminiscences has taken me about a year off and on, while this brief postscript too has taken me nearly two months off and on. It is so hot that sweat is pouring down my back. High time, surely, to make an end of it? With this I conclude.

Written by the west window of my lodging
at Tungti, Kwangchow
July 11, 1927

9516